

## The Influence of Using “THIEVES” Strategy on Junior High School Students’ Reading Comprehension

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### Article Info

### Abstract

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Though reading in English is an imperative skill for students, teaching reading somehow still becomes a problem. This research aimed to investigate the influence of using the THIEVES (*Title, Headings, Introduction, Every first sentence in a paragraph, Visuals and vocabulary, End-of-chapter questions, and Summary*) strategy on reading comprehension among the eighth-grade students of a junior high school at Serang, Banten, Indonesia. This is a quasi-experimental study, specifically a non-equivalent control group design which aims to compare the outcomes between an experimental group (n= 33) that received the THIEVES Strategy intervention and a control group (n= 34) that was not taught using the strategy. The results indicated a significant improvement in the experimental group’s reading comprehension scores compared to the control group. The result also leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>) and accepting the alternative hypothesis (H<sub>a</sub>) since the *p*-value shows *Sig* = .000 which means that the result is lower than .05. This experiment confirmed that THIEVES strategy has an influence on reading comprehension skills among students. The researchers then recommend English teachers to use an engaging and innovative strategy to captivate students’ interest and prevent boredom.

**Keywords:** reading comprehension, recount text, THIEVES strategy

## INTRODUCTION

Reading is a life skill that can be employed at school as well as in everyday life ([Küçüköğlü, 2013](#)). Reading in English is necessary for academic success in all subjects, as well as educational and economic prospects after school ([August et al., 2009](#)). Reading has two key functions: first, it serves as a means of communication, and second, it serves as a means of education ([Nunan, 2015](#)). Nunan further explained that reading for communication refers to reading for 'real-world' purposes, whereas reading for educational purposes refers to reading to expand our knowledge. Reading as a fundamental language skill has evolved into a necessary talent for academic and social success ([Asmarni et al., 2022](#)).

However, reading alone has become one of the problems that occur especially in this country Indonesia. There was a survey conducted by the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and released by the Organization for Economic Cooperation Development (OECD) in 2019 where Indonesia ranked 62 out of 70 countries with low literacy levels. In addition, there is the data that is specifically related to the region of the study submitted by the Ministry of Education and Culture, Research, and Technology of Republic of Indonesia in 2019 where reading literacy activity index of Banten Province was in 8th place out of 10 provincial rankings from all over Indonesian Province, which was defeated by provinces outside Java, such as the Riau Islands, East Kalimantan, and Bali which were in the top five ([Iman, 2020](#)).

At school level, students' reading comprehension continues to be an issue such as the students' attitude and motivation in learning reading was still low ([Asmarni et al., 2022](#)). In addition to that, students also tend to lack English vocabulary, do not have any motivation to read, and have difficulty in comprehending the text ([Husni & Wati, 2021](#)). In terms of reading comprehension, specifically, [Indrawati and Widiyana \(2019\)](#) mentioned that students had difficulties in comprehending the text and identifying the structure of the text. Students need a long time to read even though just for a short text and even often it is still difficult to comprehend the text with that long time to read ([Wärn, 2019](#)).

Prior to this research, the researchers conducted an observation and discussion with an English teacher from a junior high school in Serang, Banten, Indonesia. This preliminary observation showed that the students from that school faced particular problems on reading comprehension. The researchers then identified several key issues including: 1) students consider English as a challenging subject; 2) students have a lack of interest in reading; 3) students have a lack of motivation for reading; 4) students have a lack of English vocabulary; and 5) students have a lack of English reading comprehension skills.

Based on the preliminary analysis above, the solution should be found to overcome the issue. In that case, the researchers have decided to propose a strategy that might help teachers to improve students' reading ability which is called THIEVES strategy. THIEVES is an organized activity which is an abbreviation of Title, Headings, Introduction, Every first sentence in a paragraph, Visuals and vocabulary, End-of-chapter questions, and Summary created by [Manz \(\(2002\)](#). She added that THIEVES highlights the sections of the textbook chapter that need to be carefully read, scanned, and thought about before reading entirely. This strategy would help students comprehend a text by allowing them to preview the structure of the text in an organized manner. This improves expectations, purpose, and access to past information.

THIEVES strategy, according to [Manz \(2002\)](#), consists of seven steps that students must go through to glean knowledge from it before reading the whole text. Here are the steps of the strategy with the point that could be 'picked up or steal' from every stage, such as:

1. Title  
What information did I get from the topic? What is the connection between the topic and the chapter? What point of view does the title convey? What is the message on the text?
2. Heading  
What is the topic of the paragraph under this heading? What does this heading inform me of? How can I turn this heading into a question that the text should respond to? What does this heading mean to me?
3. Introduction  
What information about the entire chapter is given in the opening paragraph? Is the chapter properly introduced in the opening paragraph? What information does this introduction give me about the text I'll be reading? Do I know anything about this subject?
4. Every first sentence in a paragraph  
What does the entire chapter offer in the first sentence of each paragraph?
5. Visuals and vocabulary  
Does the chapter contain any images, such as pictures, drawings, maps, charts, or graphs? What may I infer from the chapter's illustrations? Is there a comprehensive list of the chapter's major terms and definitions? Are the chapter's key words consistently shown in bold type? Do I understand what the words in boldface mean?
6. End-of-chapter questions  
What are the goals of the questions? What details do I require to respond to the questions? What can I infer about the answers to the questions? In order to identify where the information is located, I need to keep in mind the questions at the end of the chapter.
7. Summary  
What have I learned and retained about the subjects covered in the summary?

THIEVES strategy focuses on in-depth text previewing and develops to assist students in activating their prior knowledge and anticipating the information they will encounter when reading which activating prior knowledge might create confidence, expectations, interest, and security in the learner's environment ([Al-Faki & Siddiek, 2013](#); [Manz, 2002](#)). It assists students in gaining a deep understanding to comprehend the text and think critically about it and to figure out the author's unstated meaning ([Gusvianti & Tiarina, 2012](#)). They also added that THIEVES Strategy makes the learning process easy, builds extensive knowledge, helps connect and predict the text by the clues that are found through the text, and effectively improves student's reading comprehension. Moreover, THIEVES strategy is applicable to any sort of literature in comparison to other reading strategies ([Asmarni et al., 2022](#)). It could be used in nonfiction text including diaries, letters, advertising and propaganda, explanation, descriptions, instructions, tables, forms, reports, arguments, notice and signs, catalogs and directories ([Gusvianti & Tiarina, 2012](#)).

A number of studies have examined the use of THIEVES strategy. A study by [Wärn \(2019\)](#), utilizing song lyrics as the text, has found that THIEVES strategy provides a way to help students comprehend the text in different text types. Furthermore, [Gusvianti and Tiarina \(2012\)](#), [Rico et al. \(2023\)](#), [Ilahi \(2021\)](#) employed descriptive text for reading and found that breaking down the text and following each of the THIEVES steps helped students to find

information in the text easier and expanded the student's understanding. In line with the previous studies, [Khataee \(2019\)](#) who used expository text concluded that this strategy could assist students in overcoming challenges such as insufficient language knowledge, time constraints, and difficult or unfamiliar topics. Similarly, [Asmarni et al. \(2022\)](#), who utilized narrative and report text, highlighted that the strategy can enhance student engagement and learning in the teaching learning process.

Moreover, in this study, the researchers aimed to examine whether or not the THIEVES strategy has an influence on students' reading comprehension. Although extensive research has been carried out on the use of THIEVES strategy for reading English texts (i.e., [Gusvianti & Tiarina, 2012](#); [Wärn, 2019](#); [Khataee, 2019](#); [Asmarni et al., 2022](#)); none of those studies focused on teaching recount text. Therefore, in this present study, the researchers used an experimental design for teaching recount text by using THIEVES strategy. The participants were students in two classes from the second grade of a junior high school. The researchers used two classes, one as experimental class and the other one as control class, in order to assess the influence of the strategy on students effectively.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research design**

In this study, the researchers used a quantitative research method. Quantitative research is the process of understanding phenomena through the collection and analysis of numerical data using mathematically based approaches (in particular statistics) ([Muijs, 2004](#)). The researcher used quasi experimental design which is the development of a true experimental design where the control group cannot fully function to control external variables that affect the implementation of the experiment ([Sugiyono, 2019](#)). A more specific design applied in this study is Non-equivalent Control Group Design, which is chosen to compare two classes with similar study background and to assess if there is any influence on reading comprehension of students.

### **Participants**

The population of the research is the eighth-grade students the academic year 2021/2022 which consist of 252 students across seven classes. The sample included the students from grade 8A (as the control group) and grade 8B (as the experimental group) which consist of 33 and 34 students in each class, respectively. To determine the sample of this research, the researchers used purposive sampling technique. This sampling technique was used to determine the sample with particular consideration ([Sugiyono, 2019](#)). Three criteria of the samples were adapted from [Novia and Nery \(2019\)](#) which include: 1) students should be at the same grade; 2) students should be taught by the same teacher; and 3) students should have been taught and learned English before. Both the chosen classes, i.e., grade 8A and grade 8B met the aforementioned criteria. Therefore, these 67 students became the sample for this study

### **Instruments**

In this research, the researchers used pre-test and post-test for both experimental and control classes. The pre-test was conducted before the treatment while the post-test was run after the treatment to see if there are any differences before and after the treatment. Both tests were adapted from an English textbook designed for the eighth-grade students and customized based on the syllabus in Curriculum 2013.

### **Research Procedure**

The procedure for both experimental and control classes include three steps, i.e., pre-test, treatment which was only conducted in the experimental class by using THIEVES Strategy, and post-test. At first, the researchers gave the pre-test to both classes, explained,

and reviewed the recount text material for them. Then, the researchers taught them how to implement the THIEVES strategy on the text. The researchers informed the students that they might not encounter all THIEVES elements in every text they read so if they could not find one, they could skip to the next element. The researchers then gave them the recount text and guided them to identify the text according to the elements in THIEVES strategy. After each element was uncovered, the researchers asked them the information they discovered then asked them to answer some questions provided together with the text. Then, the last procedure is the post-test. The researcher gave the post-test to students to find out their scores before and after the treatment.

#### Data Collection Procedure

The data collection involved administering a multiple-choice test to both classes, comprising 20 items based on Recount Text adapted from the eighth-grade English textbook. The highest score in this test is 100 with 5 (five) for the correct answer and 0 (zero) for the wrong answer. The data collection technique involved three steps, i.e., pre-test, treatment (applying the THIEVES strategy for the experimental class only), and post-test.

#### Data Analysis Procedure

This research used an Independent samples *t*-test to analyze all the quantitative data. Independent samples *t*-test is a test to determine mean scores difference between two populations or groups independent data (Field, 2018; Nuryadi et al., 2017). The researchers used SPSS software to conduct normality and homogeneity tests, prior to the Independent samples *t*-test.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This present study is an experimental study, aiming to examine whether there is any influence of the THIEVES strategy on students' reading comprehension for recount text. The participants in this research were students from grade 8A and 8B which consist of 33 and 34 students in each class, respectively.

#### Descriptive Statistics for the Pre and Post-tests

The first finding from the data analysis is the pre-test and post-test scores for the control group (COG) and the experimental group (EXP). The scores are described in the following table.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics Pre-test and Post-test for Control and Experimental Group

	N		Minimum		Maximum		Mean		Std. Deviation	
	COG	EXP	COG	EXP	COG	EXP	COG	EXP	COG	EXP
Pre-test	34	33	35	20	70	75	51.76	47.12	8.338	11.992
Post-test	34	33	50	50	85	90	65.88	71.67	9.572	9.410

For the pre-test, it can be seen from the table that the total students (N) in this research are 34 from control class (COG) The minimum score on pre-test is 35 and the maximum score is 70 from the whole class. The mean score is 51.76 and the standard deviation is 8.332 before the treatment. Meanwhile for the other group, it is shown that the total students (N) in this research are 33 from experimental class (EXP). The minimum score on pre-test is 20

and the maximum score is 75 from the whole class. The mean is 47.12 and the standard deviation is 11.992 before the treatment.

For the post-test, it shows that the total students in this research from the control group (COG) are 34 students. The minimum score on pre-test is 50 and the maximum score is 85 from the whole class. The mean is 65.88. From this analysis result, it could see that there is a change in the score result, from the minimum score in pre-test is 35 to 70 in post-test and from the maximum score 70 in pre-test to 85 in post-test. So does the mean scores that also improved from 51.76 to 65.88. There is an increasing score in this group though they were not taught by using the THIEVES strategy.

Meanwhile, from Table 1, it could be seen that the total students for the experimental group (EXP) in this research are 33 students. The minimum score on pre-test is 50 and the maximum score is 90 from the whole class. The mean is 71.67. From this analysis result, it could see that there is a change in the score result, from the minimum score in pre-test is 20 to 50 in post-test and from the maximum score 75 in pre-test to 90 in post-test. So does the mean change from 47.12 to 71.67. There is an increasing score in the class in before and after the treatment by using the THIEVES strategy.

### Normality and Homogeneity Tests

Normality and homogeneity tests are assumption tests which matter in small samples (Field, 2018). Since the sample size of this study was quite small (i.e., 67 students in total), before conducting the *t*-test, the researchers ran these two assumption tests first. The result of the normality test for the Control (COG) and Experimental (EXP) group is described below.

**Table 2.** Results of Normality Test

Group	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>a</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk			
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.	
Reading Comprehension	Control	.175	34	.010	.918	34	.014
	Experiment	.131	33	.160	.964	33	.334

#### a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Based on the table, the result of Sig. in Experiment class is 0.334 and Sig. in Control class is 0.014. Those are more than 0.05, it means that  $H_a$  is rejected and the data distributed normally in Experimental and Control groups.

The homogeneity test is a test to judge whether the data were homogeneous or not. If the Sig. on 'Based on Mean' is  $> .05$  then the data were homogenous. If the Sig. on 'Based on Mean' is  $< 0.05$  then the data were not homogenous. The following hypotheses and their criteria are described for the homogeneity test.

#### a. The Hypothesis

$H_0$ : the variance of the data is homogeneous

$H_1$ : the variance of the data is not homogeneous

#### b. The Criteria

$H_0$  is accepted is Sig  $> .05$

$H_1$  is accepted if Sig  $< .05$

The result of the homogeneity test is described in the following table.

**Table 3.** Variance of Homogeneity Test

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Reading Comprehe nsion	Based on Mean	.003	1	65	.958
	Based on Median	.005	1	65	.944
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.005	1	58.922	.944
	Based on trimmed mean	.006	1	65	.940

According to the test results, it shows that  $Sig. = .958$  which is more than  $.05$  ( $.958 > .05$ ). It means that  $H_0$  is accepted and  $H_1$  is rejected. It also means that the data on this research were homogenous.

### Independent Samples *T*-test

After running the assumption tests and the results from the two tests were met, the researchers then ran the independent samples *t*-test to compare the mean scores between two groups, i.e., control and experimental groups. The hypotheses for this test are described as follow:

$H_0$  is accepted if  $Sig > .05$

$H_1$  is accepted if  $Sig < .05$

The results for independent samples *t*-test is reported in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Results of Independent Samples *T*-test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2- taile d)	Mean Differ ence	Std. Error Differ ence	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Reading Compre hension	Equal variances assumes	1.05 2	.309	5.2 54	65	.000	19.773	3.763	12.257	27.289
	Equal variances not assume			5.2 45	63. 713	.000	19.773	3.770	12.241	27.304

According to the table, the  $p$  value (Sig. 2-tailed) is  $.000$ , which is less than  $.05$ . It means that  $H_0$  is rejected and  $H_1$  is accepted. Based on the calculation of the independent samples *t*-test, it could be concluded that THIEVES strategy has a significant effect on reading comprehension among the eighth-grade students in the experimental group.

Both pre-test and post-test in the control and experimental groups were in the form of multiple choice questions which consisted of 20 questions for each test. The maximum score in this test is 100 with 5 (five) for the correct answer and 0 (zero) for the wrong answer.

In the control class, the researchers initiated the pre-test, post-test, and treatment phases without implementing THIEVES strategy. The procedures commenced with the explanation and review of the recount text material to familiarize students with the text used in the research. The researchers then gave students the first text entitled "Summer Festival" and asked students to read the text without applying the THIEVES Strategy, so that students read the whole text from start to finish directly. After they finished reading the text, the students were questioned about the text without access to it, struggling to recall the details. Although they asked to give a chance to read once more but because of the limitation of the time it was not possible to give an extra time, prompting the researcher to allow students to see the text while answering the proposed questions until the second text, entitled "A tour of British Houses." Students encountered difficulties to remember and comprehend the text generally so that students need extra tools such as dictionaries and textbooks as their assistance. Then, at the end students must fill the post-test to know if there are any differences after the treatment phase.

On the other hand, in the experimental class, the researchers conducted pre-test, post-test, and the treatment by implementing the THIEVES strategy. Similar to the control group, the researchers also explained and reviewed the recount text material then provided examples. Then, the researchers gave the first text entitled "Summer Festival" and instructed on applying the THIEVES strategy, starting from *Title* to *Summary*. At first, students seem confused about the application of the strategy so that the researchers need to lead them slowly. After several repeated explanations, they gradually became independent in utilizing the strategy on the text. However, there were still some students who were still confused about applying the strategy. In that process, the researchers gave time to students to apply that strategy while kept observing them.

After the previous teaching and learning process, the researchers asked students about the information that they got from the text by using the THIEVES strategy by reading the title, heading, introduction, in every first sentence, visuals and vocabulary, end of chapter questions, and summary. This knowledge activation strategy was used in order to facilitate students' comprehension of the text ([Hattan et al., 2024](#)). However, when it came to the step of *Summary*, the students tended to be confused about how to construct the words. They were confused about how to deliver the information properly in English. Therefore, the researchers helped them to construct the words in the sequence information based on the steps of the strategy. This writing after reading activity known as summarizing also aims to develop students' higher order literacy skills ([Deane & Traga Philippakos, 2024](#)). After that, they may read the whole text and answer the questions in the text. After they finished and understood the rules of the THIEVES Strategy application, researchers gave them the second text.

In the second text, there were more questions than the previous text that just concluded the essay questions. In the second text, there were true false questions but in this phase students displayed an improvement. They could apply the strategy independently generally and were able to answer the questions with most of the right answers and the time that needed to read also decreased. In the first text, students were still confused with applying the strategy, the content of the text, and questions involved. However, in the second text the confusion of the strategy decreased so students could focus more on the content and questions of the text. After the treatment process was finished, students proceeded to fill out the post-test.



Based on the result of data analysis, it could be concluded that the THIEVES strategy has influence on the students' reading comprehension scores. Moreover, when the researchers asked the students about their experience by using the strategy and not, they said by using the THIEVES Strategy they could comprehend more about the text than when they do not use any of the strategy. They considered that the strategy could make the process of reading comprehension shorter. It was hard at first but then after they knew how to apply the strategy, they could independently apply that in the text. They just need a habituation to that strategy in order to become independent and confident on applying the strategy on the text especially in the text of this research which is recount text.

As mentioned earlier, the results of this research showed that the THIEVES strategy has a positive influence on students' reading comprehension. This result is in line with those previous studies such as [Al-Faki and Siddiek \(2013\)](#); [Gusvianti and Tiarina \(2012\)](#); [Indrawati and Widiana \(2019\)](#); [Khataee \(2019\)](#); [Wärn \(2019\)](#); [Asmarni et al. \(2022\)](#); and [Faten \(2022\)](#). which showed the positive result by using THIEVES Strategy on reading comprehension and which showed that it helps students' get a better understanding of reading the text.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analyses, it showed that the mean scores of pre-test and post-test in control class were 51.76 and 65.88, respectively. While the mean scores of pre-test and post-test in experimental class were 47.12 and 71.67, respectively. Both of the groups showed the increase in the process with or without the THIEVES strategy but the class that used THIEVES strategy has the higher mean score than the class that is not used THIEVES strategy ( $71.67 > 65.88$ ). Then, to compare the average scores from these two groups, based on the independent sample *t*-test, the *p* value was .000, which is lower than .05. From this result, it could be concluded that  $H_0$  is rejected and  $H_1$  is accepted. In other words, THIEVES strategy has a significant influence on English reading comprehension learning. This finding is relevant with the research from [Wärn \(2019\)](#); [Khataee \(2019\)](#); [Novia and Nery \(2019\)](#); [Indrawati and Widiana \(2019\)](#); and [Al-Faki and Siddiek \(2013\)](#). The students from the class that was taught by using the THIEVES strategy had revealed better reading comprehension than those who were not taught by the same strategy for learning. Therefore, THIEVES Strategy could be used by students in the learning process of reading English text especially for teaching recount text.

However, the researcher discerned that the implementation of this strategy demands substantial concentration. A number of suggestions are offered by the researchers. First, the learning process should be done in an engaging and innovative way to captivate students' interest and prevent boredom. Second, justify the text that will be used as the learning media according to the level and the ability of the students. Third, for future research, the researchers suggest that they conduct similar research at higher education levels such as high school or university levels in which students already have the higher intensity focus and have better self-regulation to really pay attention in the steps of the strategy. Moreover, future research may include other text genres for example information report or essay. Lastly, they may also conduct any similar study by using different research methods such as by mix method to to attain a more comprehensive understanding of the result. This research has been limited to only using a quantitative method and involved only small size samples.

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