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Engaging Vocational High Students in Directed Reading Thinking Activity Strategy (Drta) Reading Comprehension in News Item Text

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A B S T R A C T

The phenomenon of Vocational High Students struggling with English reading comprehension, especially in news item text is considerably urgent, the level of English literacy among students' is quite alarming. Many students could not understand what they read. The purpose of this research is to investigate the efficacy of the DRTA (Directed Reading Thinking Activity) strategy in engaging and improving vocational students' comprehension and participation regarding news item texts. This research conducted in Qualitative research with a classroom action research (CAR) design. The data are collected from teacher's reflective journals, students' interviews, and class documents. The findings indicate that the application of the DRTA method enables students to engage through the cycles of prediction, verification, and reflection, evolve from passive to active readers. This method also improves students' cognitive, affective, and social engagement. The integration of DRTA with a genre-based approach (TLC-DG) further enhances students' comprehension of the social structure and functions of texts. This evidence suggests the need to adopt DRTA as a pivotal approach to critical literacy in 21st century vocational education.

1. Introduction

In the digital era, where access to information is instant and abundant, the ability to comprehend and critically analyze written texts is a fundamental literacy skill that must be possessed by every student, particularly those in vocational education settings. However, reading comprehension remains a persistent challenge among vocational high school (SMK) students in Indonesia, especially when it involves informational texts such as news item texts. Many students engage in reading passively, often limited to decoding words without constructing meaning. This is exacerbated by conventional teaching methods that rely on question-answer exercises, offering little space for critical thinking or active engagement.

This difficulty is not merely a result of linguistic limitations, but is also closely linked to students' low engagement with reading materials and the prevalent use of teacher-centered strategies that fail to foster active and reflective reading behavior. As the demands of 21st-century literacy increase, vocational students must be equipped not only with technical skills but also with the ability to process, evaluate, and reflect on written information relevant to the workplace and broader society.

To address these challenges, the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) strategy offers a structured approach that engages students in making predictions, verifying information, and reflecting critically during reading. First introduced by Stauffer (1969), DRTA transforms reading into an active, metacognitive process. It encourages students to construct meaning through inquiry, rather than passively absorbing text. Based on study Azahro & Hamid (2024) stated that DRTA's effective in improving comprehension and engagement, though its implementation in vocational education. Similarly, Husin and Harmayanthi (2023) reported that high school students taught using DRTA showed greater confidence and interest in reading.

However, Al Odwan (2012) stated that DRTA has been proven to increase student engagement and understanding. The effectiveness of DRTA has also been tested in various foreign language learning contexts, including a study in Thailand (Chaemsai & Rattanavich, 2016), DRTA method, through tales of virtue based on His Majesty the King's teaching concepts, improve development in English reading comprehension and ethical awareness, compared to the traditional approach alone. Some studies in Indonesia have also shown the success of DRTA in the context of high schools and vocational schools (Ginting, 2019; Mardiana, 2021; Megawati, 2018; Nerim, 2020).

This study focuses on news texts because they are still underexplored. Based on the genre of news texts, which includes structured elements such as titles, introductions, and sources, and requires high-level literacy skills for interpretation, it is considered very suitable for using the DRTA strategy. In the vocational curriculum, these texts are not only part of language learning but also tools to strengthen media literacy. However, the genre's complexity often hinders student understanding without explicit instruction. Therefore, this research integrates DRTA with the Teaching and Learning Cycle. However, Humphrey (2021) emphasizes that TLC is effective in helping students gradually understand academic genres. From the various TLC models available, TLC-DG model by Westerlund (2024) used because it was suitable for the content and objectives of this study. A genre-based model that supports students in identifying text structure, language features, and communicative purpose. The theoretical basis of this study draws on Vygotsky's Social Constructivism, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), and Genre-Based Pedagogy.

According to Grabe & Stoller (2011), decoding, inference, and information integration interact intricately to affect reading comprehension. Functional Linguistics Systemic (SFL) According to the SFL method, language is used to create meaning in social contexts (Halliday, 1973; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013).

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) underscores the importance of teacher scaffolding, while SFL helps decode the social function of news texts. The TLC-DG model complements DRTA by guiding learners through genre exploration, building from contextual knowledge to independent reading and reflection. This approach aligns with Indonesia's *Merdeka Curriculum*, which emphasizes critical literacy, student agency, and differentiated learning. This study aims to investigate the process and outcomes of engaging vocational high school students in the Directed Reading Thinking Activity strategy for improving their comprehension of news item texts. Specifically, the research addresses two primary questions:

- (1) How do students engage in comprehending news item texts through the DRTA strategy?
- (2) What are the students' reactions to the DRTA-based learning activities?

2. Methodology

Research Design

To support this research, as the two research questions that are the root of this study: (1) How do students engage in comprehend reading in news item texts with DRTA? And (2) What are the students' reactions to these activities? The appropriate design in this study is Action Research design. Referring to the action research framework developed by Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon (2014) and Mertler (2009). In this study, the researcher employed an action research approach based on the conceptual model established by Dikilitaş and Griffiths (2017). This design was selected as it corresponds with the primary goal of the research, which is to comprehend and enhance learning practices directly via reflective and participatory interventions in authentic classroom settings.

Action research is described as more than just a method for collecting data; it is a transformative process for teacher practices that emphasizes collaboration and is rooted in context. However, Dikilitaş & Griffiths (2017) highlight that "Action research involves teachers in a form of systematic inquiry into their own practice, aiming at both understanding and improving it." This statement establishes the philosophical basis that educators are not merely performers in their roles but also investigators of their own professional methodologies.

The action research design proposed by Dikilitaş & Griffiths effectively promotes teacher reflection on learning challenges stemming from classroom experiences, facilitates the creation of contextual action solutions, and engages in a cyclical process that encompasses planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. This model highlights the significance of teachers' reflective awareness as change agents, who actively assess the impact of the strategies employed. This research applies the model to systematically assess the effectiveness of the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) strategy in conjunction with the Teaching and Learning Cycle (TLC-DG) for enhancing vocational high school students' reading skills in relation to news texts. The process of observation and reflection is conducted with great

care in each cycle, ensuring that every change is grounded in valid and relevant data analysis. Dikilitaş & Griffiths explain that "In action research, reflection is not an afterthought, but a built-in component of every phase of the process." This design offers a combination of flexibility and depth in examining the direct effects of learning strategies on students' learning behavior.

The action research method design, which was adapted from Dikilitaş & Griffiths, is shown in the table below. All techniques were changed to conform to this research.

Table 1. Stages of Action Research Adapted from Dikilitaş & Griffiths (2017) in Yanto, E.S et al. (2020)

No	Stage	Activities
1.	Develop a plan of Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifying the issue of low reading comprehension in vocational high school students and selecting news item texts as the focus of discussion. - Investigating and developing appropriate strategies for engaging with news texts (DRTA). - Determining the research question. - Determining the research paradigm. - Reviewing relevant literature. - Discussing and selecting data collection methods. - Engaging in discussions and preparing tools for data collection, including reflective journals, audio recordings, semi-structured interviews, and learning notes. Securing approval and managing other ethical processes. - Engaging in a conversation about the action implementation design with the collaborating teacher.
2.	Act to Implement the Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initiating the lesson with engaging interactions and friendly greetings to ignite students' enthusiasm for learning - Fostering an enjoyable classroom environment that encourages students to engage actively in lessons throughout their duration. - Initiating the conversation by outlining the lessons to be addressed. - Inquiring of the students, "Have you ever engaged with news texts previously?" "What is your approach to reading the news?"
	Delivering Lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introducing students to the concept of news text, outlining its structure, and explaining the rules governing news text. - Presenting a sample of a news article

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engage and direct students in the DRTA strategy as they read news text content. - Assisting students in developing news text readings following the stages of the DRTA procedure (Predicting, reading and confirming, reflecting)
Practice and application		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Split the paragraph into sections and encourage the students to make predictions prior to reading the subsequent section. "What are your thoughts on what might occur?" "What leads you to that conclusion?" "What happened?" - Following the initial reading session, the instructor clarifies the content and significance of the news text that was read. Request the students to present the created news text and explain its true meaning. - Encourage the students to comprehend the outcomes of their reflections from the initial reading session. Next, move on to the second reading session, during which the students will read independently, following the same procedures established in the first reading session, without any guidance from the instructor. - Following the second reading session, present the assembled news text once more and include the actual content of the news text.
Review reflections & Rework		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The outcomes of the students' reflections from the initial reading session, conducted with guidance, alongside the findings from the subsequent reading session, were identified. - Assess and articulate the outcomes of the students' work, providing evaluations and enhancements on the reading results
Assessment Reflecting journal		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inviting them to take part in a semi-structured interview - Relevant data from student reflective journals, learning notes, photo voice, and interviews has been categorized.
3. Stages 3: Observe the effects of action in the context		Carrying out analysis procedures by coding all recorded data and qualitative topic or theme finding.

4. Stages 4: Interpret the results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Addressing the research questions using evidence derived from the data. - Highlighting the implications. - Acknowledging the study's limitations. - Exploring future directions by proposing a research agenda that remains unexamined in this study.
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Instructional Procedures

This research employs the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) strategy, which emphasizes prediction and confirmation activities during reading, while also incorporating the Teaching and Learning Cycle for Disciplinary Genres (TLC-DG) approach as the primary pedagogical framework. TLC-DG serves as a valuable tool, effectively connecting reading experiences with the structured production of written language. Based on study Westerlund (2024) highlights that a primary reason students face difficulties in writing is that "writing is assigned, not taught," with numerous teachers merely assigning writing tasks without helping students grasp the structure and purpose of academic genres. Consequently, the TLC-DG procedure, encompassing the phases of planning, knowledge building, deconstruction, joint construction, and independent construction, proves to be highly effective in assisting vocational high school students in comprehending the genre of news texts in a systematic and clear manner.

The main objective of employing TLC-DG in this research is to effectively bolster the attainment of DRTA objectives by establishing a robust linguistic basis for comprehending and producing news text genres. During this cycle, students engage in predicting the content of news texts while also learning to analyze language structures (text deconstruction), collaboratively construct meaning with the teacher (joint construction), and ultimately create their own texts independently. For the sake of this study, the TLC-DG technique was purposefully altered to include the DRTA strategy, as shown in the table below.

Table 2. Instructional Procedures Adapted from Westerlund. R (2024)

Stage & Phase	Instructor Activities	Learner Activities	Instruments / Outputs
I. Planning with the end in mind (TLC-DG Phase I)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Define and present the research objectives to the teaching team. 2. Select a news text and designate 3–4 stopping points. 3. Develop the DRTA chart template with columns: Prediction, Justification, Actual Outcome, Source of Difficulty. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review the research proposal summary. 2. Provide feedback on the choice of news text. 3. Examine the DRTA chart format and ask clarifying questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research objectives list - Marked news text - DRTA chart prototype

II. Building knowledge about the field (TLC-DG Phase II)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain news-genre features (lead, facts, quotations, causal relations). 2. Model the DRTA procedure using a brief news excerpt. 3. Prompt with, "How would you predict the next section based on the headline?" 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Listen to the genre explanation. 2. Participate in the DRTA demonstration and replicate the chart structure. 3. Respond orally and in writing with 1–2 initial predictions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Genre-feature summary notes - Sample DRTA chart
III. Data Collection via DRTA (TLC-DG Phases II–IV)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. For each stopping point: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Display the headline and image (Preview). b. Facilitate discussion to validate predictions. c. Record each learner's reported difficulties. 2. Provide immediate feedback after each segment. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prediction: Write the anticipated content for the next segment in the DRTA chart. 2. Justification: Document the rationale in one to two sentences. 3. Read until the stopping point, then note Actual Outcome and Source of Difficulty. 4. Revise prediction based on discussion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Completed DRTA charts - Difficulty log
IV. Deconstruction & Joint Construction (TLC-DG Phases III–IV)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Select exemplary learner responses and project them. 2. Review linguistic features: theme–rheme structure, tense usage, causal connectors. 3. Guide labeling of word groups (nouns, verbs, conjunctions). 4. Lead collaborative sentence-construction. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify language features in the exemplar (answer instructor prompts). 2. Highlight grammatical functions on the model text with color or labels. 3. Co-construct explanatory sentences on the board in small groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Color-coded anchor chart - Co-authored text on board
V. Independent Construction (TLC-DG Phase V)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide a writing guide: (a) evolution of predictions, (b) causal explanations, (c) metacognitive reflection. 2. Monitor writing progress and offer brief written comments. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Compose a 300–400-word summary of prediction development for each segment. 2. Incorporate at least three causal connectors in explanations. 3. Complete the reflection section: "What was most challenging?" and "What strategies did I use?" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learner summary document - Daily reflection sheet

VI. Presentations & Feedback	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Select 3–5 learners randomly for 2–3 minute presentations each. 2. Deliver structured oral feedback (praise and development points). 3. Record improvement suggestions on the board. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Present summaries and reflections to peers. 2. Respond to peer questions. 3. Note instructor and peer suggestions for revision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentation recordings (optional) - Feedback board
VII. Analysis & Further Reflection (TLC-DG Phase VI)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Code DRTA charts and written summaries to identify patterns in prediction accuracy and linguistic difficulties. 2. Draft a qualitative report: prediction accuracy, revision ability, language-feature usage. 3. Design subsequent instructional actions. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participate in small-group discussions: “Which DRTA strategies were most effective?” 2. Develop 1–2 peer recommendations based on personal experience. 3. Complete a follow-up planning sheet focusing on vocabulary or structure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Qualitative analysis report - Follow-up instructional plan

This method draws upon Vygotsky's theory of apprenticeship learning, highlighting that learning occurs as a social process through incremental scaffolding (Rothery, 1996; Westerlund, 2024). Additional studies indicate that incorporating TLC into content learning greatly enhances academic literacy for students, particularly for those who are multilingual (Malin & Westerlund, *in press*; Rosa & Drysdale-Hodgson, 2023). Therefore, the use of TLC-DG within the DRTA strategy seeks to establish a more focused, contextual, and effective reading learning experience for vocational high school students.

Participant

The research conducted at one of the Vocational high schools in Karawang. There are several considerations the author chose the site. First, the geographical location of the school is easily accessible by author and also the author has been familiar with the school conditions and situations that can help author easily to adapt. The participant of this study is one class of the 12th grades and three students became the representatives for interview. The class was selected purposively (not randomly) based on the recommendation from the teacher and three students was chosen based on the observations of author during the learning process as representatives for doing interview.

Instrument

The instruments used in this study were designed to gather in-depth and contextual data in accordance with the action research approach. The three main instruments used were the DRTA Chart, the teacher's reflective journal, and the semi-structured student interview guide. The DRTA chart served as a student worksheet for conducting DRTA. The reflective journal was compiled by the researcher, who is also a teaching practitioner, to systematically record the learning process, student

responses, classroom dynamics, and evaluations of the effectiveness of the DRTA strategy in each session. This instrument allowed the researcher to critically reflect on teaching practices and changes in student learning behavior over time. Meanwhile, the interview guide was designed to explore students' subjective experiences with the reading process using the DRTA strategy. The questions were structured flexibly and referred to indicators of student engagement, such as motivation, understanding of news text structure, and challenges faced. This guide is adapted and modified from a model developed by Westerlund (2024) to be relevant to the vocational context. These two instruments complement each other and provide rich data for thematic analysis, allowing for an in-depth response to the research questions. The chart table below shows student worksheets as data instruments. Using the chart provided as a guide, students fill in their predictions for each paragraph.

Table 3. DRTA Chart Adapted from Crawford (2005)

	What do you think will happen?	Why do you think so?	What did happen?
After Reading The Title			
After Reading the first part			
After Reading the second part			
After reading the Last Part			

Data Collection and Data Analysis

Data in this study were collected through three main techniques: teacher reflective journals, semi-structured interviews with students, and video documentation during the learning process. Reflective journals recorded classroom dynamics, student responses, and teachers' evaluations of the effectiveness of the DRTA strategy, while interviews explored students' in-depth experiences, perceptions, and motivations regarding reading activities using this approach. Video documentation captures student-teacher interactions, the prediction, verification, and reflection processes that occur during learning, enabling multimodal analysis of student engagement.

All data were managed and analyzed according to the principles of qualitative validity as described by Sutton & Austin (2015) using the thematic analysis approach from Braun & Clarke (2006), which consists of six stages: understanding the data, initial coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, naming and defining themes, and compiling the final report. This process allows researchers to identify patterns of students' cognitive, affective, and social engagement in DRTA-based reading instruction, while also linking them to the vocational learning context holistically and reflectively.

3. Results and Discussion

Based on data from teacher reflective journals and interviews, two main themes emerged in response to the following research question: (1) How do students engage in comprehending news item texts thru the DRTA strategy? (2) What are the students' reactions to the DRTA-based learning activities? The two themes are Theme (1) Transforming Reading Strategies and Student Cognitive Engagement thru DRTA, and Theme (2) Positive Responses to DRTA and Its Impact on Affect, Self-Confidence, and Social Interaction. These results are presented narratively along with a discussion. These findings are consistent with previous research confirming the success of DRTA at various educational levels (Defoe, 1999; El-Koumy, 2006; Erliana, 2011; Dewi, 2013; Dewi et al., 2023; Nudho et al., 2013).

Theme 1: Transforming Students' Reading Strategies and Cognitive Engagement through DRTA

The application of the DRTA strategy has been proven to facilitate significant changes in how students interact with text. Initially, many students exhibited a passive and linear reading pattern, focusing solely on word-for-word translation without understanding the overall meaning or structure of the news text. However, through the prediction, verification, and reflection stages in DRTA, students began to develop more strategic, analytical, and reflective reading habits. Haggard (1988) asserts that DRTA is a method for developing critical thinking skills through prediction and verification.

During the classroom, I cover learning preparation, background knowledge, easy-to-understand information, strategies, interaction, practice/application, and lesson delivery. I also teach students how to read news using DRTA and how to understand the structure of news items thru the TLC-DG approach. Through lectures, discussions, and small group assignments, students learn how to read news texts, starting with analyzing the news images they see and the news headlines. Then, I taught the students how to understand the content of the news by giving them the opportunity to make predictions before reading the next text. Next, after making predictions, I showed them the content of the next text to see if it matched their predictions.

After finding out their prediction results, they confirmed them with the reading text to see if their predictions were close to the actual content of the text. After this confirmation, the students were guided to know and predict what would happen in the next reading text. Then the students repeated the process of predicting the content of the next text based on what they had learned from the previous text. This prediction, confirmation, and reflection activity continued until the end of the news text. After the overall results of constructing the news text were found, I asked the students to reflect on their reading results, and the conclusion of the news text content was reached. Finally, I asked the students to analyze the text structure. I introduced the students to the fact that the content of the news text structure includes events that have already happened or are happening now.

The figure below shows the process of the researcher delivering the News Item text material and the DRTA strategy. The material was provided to each student's gadget due to the limited functionality of the projector.



Figure 1. Lecturing Session

One student stated:

P1: "Before, I would just read and try to translate every word, but now after going thru this DRTA strategy process, I think more before reading, trying to figure out what the text is going to be about."

This quote indicates the activation of prior knowledge and predictive thinking skills as part of cognitive engagement. The process of prediction based on titles, images, or initial paragraphs helps students form expectations about meaning before reading the entire text. The finding corroborates Azahro & Hamid (2024) who affirm that DRTA activates students' critical reasoning by requiring them to evaluate the accuracy of their initial assumptions as they engage with the evolving text.

Another student added:

P2: "When I found out the text content was different from what I predicted, I became curious and wanted to know why it was different. So, I thought more and didn't just accept the text content blindly."

This statement reflects students' growing metacognitive awareness in the process of verifying and revising their understanding. DRTA not only improves literal comprehension but also encourages inferential and evaluative abilities. Students' ability to exchange ideas and reconcile different interpretations provided opportunities for mutual scaffolding precisely what Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes. This finding affirms Alfiani et al. (2024), who noted that DRTA's group-based format promotes the co-construction of knowledge.

Additionally, some students began to realize the importance of news text structure and started using it as a guide to understand information.

P3: "Now I understand that news texts always have a main part, then an explanation, and then a source. So, I can understand the steps better."

I also noted in the reflective journal that the student showed improvement in their ability to recognize genre elements such as headlines, background events, and sources, especially after the post-reading reflective discussion session. This finding emphasize that genre-based pedagogy helps learners identify the purpose, structure, and language features of factual texts. DRTA, when paired with genre-based instruction, provided functional support that helped learners navigate the ideational and textual meta-functions as outlined in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). The SFL approach views language as a means of constructing meaning within a social context (Halliday, 1973; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013).

Theme 2: Positive Response to DRTA and Its Impact on Affect, Self-Confidence, and Social Interaction

Beside cognitive impacts, the DRTA strategy also produces significant affective and social engagement. Students feel more confident, motivated, and actively engaged in learning. This is triggered by the DRTA approach, which encourages students to participate in group discussions and openly share their predictions and understanding. Some students admitted that they previously felt scared or unconfident when asked to read English texts. However, the process-based and non-demanding nature of the DRTA approach made them feel more comfortable.

P4: "Initially, I was afraid of guessing the text's content incorrectly. But it turns out that in DRTA, it's okay if your predictions are wrong; it's even fun if you can discuss them together."

Students' reactions indicated a transformation in their emotional connection with English reading activities. Initially hesitant and insecure, students grew increasingly confident as they successfully predicted, discussed, and confirmed ideas. Students also mentioned that group discussions provided them with space to learn from each other and enrich their understanding of the text. However, this findings related to Husin & Harmayanthi (2023) who demonstrated that DRTA increases learner autonomy and enjoyment by framing reading as a meaningful, goal-oriented task.

Through discussion, students go through the steps of constructing the news item text. The figure below shows the process of how students discuss with their respective groups to understand the content of the news text. These emotional gains are crucial for vocational students, who often perceive English reading as irrelevant to their vocational identity. DRTA helped reposition reading as a purposeful, social, and even empowering activity especially through its collaborative nature.



Figure 2. Students constructing News Item Text with group Discussion

P5: "My predictions are often different from my friends'. But from that, I can actually see other perspectives and understand the news content better."

DRTA promotes social engagement by incorporating group discussions, which play a crucial role in this strategy. At every stage particularly during the verification of predictions and reflection on the text's content students engage in discussions, share opinions, and negotiate meanings. This process guides them in articulating their viewpoints in a persuasive manner, all the while honouring the perspectives of others. This experience not only increased curiosity but also strengthened students' communication and collaboration skills.

P6: "Usually, I read by myself. But this time, we talked first, discussed, and then read. So, it's more enthusiastic and not boring."

This statement illustrates how DRTA fosters horizontal interaction among students, thereby enhancing group cohesion, cultivating empathy, and enriching understanding through social dialogue. This aligns with Vygotsky's concept in Margolis (2020) perspective that social interaction serves as the primary basis for cognitive development, and that collaboration can enhance understanding within the zone of proximal development (ZPD).

This finding is further supported by Alfiani et al. (2024) who highlight that discussions in DRTA promote the collaborative construction of knowledge, where the meaning of the text is developed collectively, rather than in isolation. This is highly relevant and practically valuable within the framework of vocational school learning that prioritizes teamwork and communication.

I noted in my reflective journal that the classroom atmosphere became more alive and participatory, with students who are usually passive starting to actively raise their hands to share predictions or respond to their classmates' ideas. Discussion is no longer one-way from teacher to student, but rather dialogic and collaborative. Furthermore, this approach provides a safe space for students to learn from mistakes and build understanding gradually, which is crucial in forming critical literacy habits. However, Wilson (2016) revealed that appropriate scaffolding support encourages readers to become more critical.

P7: "If the prediction is wrong, it doesn't mean it's a failure. Instead, you learn which information is important and which is just supportive."

Affective engagement includes the emotions, attitudes, and motivation that students experience throughout their learning journey. This research reveals a notable rise in students' enthusiasm and confidence when it comes to reading English texts, which had previously posed a considerable challenge for many vocational high school students. Students expressed that the DRTA method transformed reading activities into a more enjoyable and engaging experience, as they participated in the thinking process rather than merely responding to questions.

4. Conclusion

This study's findings indicate that the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) strategy significantly improves students' engagement in reading comprehension of news item texts in vocational high schools. DRTA promotes engagement with texts by fostering prediction, verification, and reflection thereby enhancing higher-order thinking and encouraging metacognitive awareness. This approach shifts students from being passive readers to becoming active, strategic readers capable of critically interpreting textual meaning. Additionally, by combining DRTA with a genre-based approach (TLC-DG), students engage with the content while gaining insight into the structural and social functions of news texts, thereby enhancing their understanding through genre awareness. The study revealed that students had overwhelmingly positive reactions to the DRTA strategy. Students demonstrated heightened motivation, confidence, and enjoyment while reading English texts an area they had once viewed as difficult or uninteresting. The collaborative nature of DRTA, particularly through prediction and group discussion stages, enabled students to feel more supported and involved in the reading process. Social interactions encouraged shared learning and enhanced communication skills, leading to an engaging and inclusive classroom atmosphere. These responses confirm that DRTA enhances comprehension and transforms learners' attitudes towards reading English texts.

In summary, DRTA, when applied in a systematic and contextual manner, acts as a transformative reading strategy that caters to both the cognitive and emotional aspects of literacy. It enables vocational high school students to read with intention, assurance, and analytical insight abilities that are essential for engaging with informational texts across academic, vocational, and digital landscapes. However,

Parhodeh (2025) stated that literacy cannot be separated from students' social and cultural context. This study confirms DRTA's potential both as a teaching method and as a comprehensive literacy development model that aligns with the educational objectives of the 21st century.

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