

## **Empowering Reading Comprehension in EFL Vocational School Students through Folktale**

**Enni**

Universitas Tomakaka

**Nurul Hasanah**

Institut Agama Islam Negeri Parepare

**Syahban Mada Ali**

Institut Ilmu Sosial dan Bisnis Andi Sapada

### **Abstract**

Recognizing the imperative of enhancing students' comprehension in reading, especially within the context of vocational schools, the need for innovative learning approaches becomes crucial. This research aimed to assess the effectiveness of employing folktales to enhance the reading abilities of eleventh-grade students at SMK Tiwikrama Mamuju. Conducted through a pre-experimental design, the study incorporated both pretest and posttest assessments with an intervention in between. The research was conducted during the academic year 2022/2023, involving three classes comprising a total of 105 students. Utilizing purposive sampling, a sample size of 23 students was selected for the study, with the reading test serving as the primary research instrument. The data analysis unveiled a noteworthy improvement in students' mean scores, escalating from a pre-test score of 48 (categorized as very poor) to a post-test score of 75 (categorized as good). The calculated t-test value of 21.09 exceeded the critical t-table value of 2.074 at a significance level of  $\alpha=0.05$ . This higher t-test value led to the rejection of the null hypothesis and the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis. Consequently, the utilization of folktales demonstrated a significant enhancement in the reading abilities of eleventh-grade students at SMK Tiwikrama Mamuju.

### **Keywords**

Folktale, Reading Comprehension, Teaching English, Vocational School

---

### **Corresponding author:**

Nurul Hasanah, Institut Agama Islam Negeri Parepare, Parepare, Indonesia

Email: [nurulhasanah@iainpare.ac.id](mailto:nurulhasanah@iainpare.ac.id)

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Indonesia national education system emphasizes four crucial English learning skills: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation are three essential elements that complement these skills (Ali, 2022). Among these skills, reading is considered essential because it significantly affects language acquisition and overall learning outcomes. The acquisition of reading skills then is very much dependent on language development (Aswad et al., 2023). Despite its importance, the teaching of reading has been disregarded in certain educational institutions, as observed by (Maltepe, 2016).

Effective English teaching, especially in reading, is paramount, as success in's overall language proficiency. Through reading, individuals have the opportunity to broaden their perspectives, gain fresh insights, and improve their problem-solving skills (Noviasmy et al., 2023). Regrettably, society still undervalues the importance of reading, resulting in a large number of people being labeled as poor readers and reading low-quality materials (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2021).

The main issue identified at SMK Tiwikrama Mamuju is that students struggle to comprehend the material they read. A significant number of students struggle with comprehending texts, lacking the ability to identify implicit and explicit information (Bakti & Ali, 2023). The lack of motivation among students to read is a widespread problem, worsened by the traditional teaching methods used in reading classes (Rahman et al., 2022). The teacher-centric approach, characterized by reading from textbooks and answering subsequent questions, contributes to boredom and lack motivation (Moon & Kwan, 2022).

The effectiveness of folktales in enhancing students' reading achievement at SMK Tiwikrama Mamuju is explored in this research. By using cultural narratives and a more interactive teaching method, the study aims to boost students' comprehension, motivation, and overall reading performance.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Academic success and effective communication depend on the fundamental skill of reading comprehension in language acquisition. In the realm of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, empowering students to comprehend written texts is of paramount importance. In this literature review, the focus is on exploring current research and theories that aim to improve reading comprehension among vocational school students, using folktales as a pedagogical tool.

### *Importance of Reading Comprehension in EFL Education*

Understanding the significance of reading comprehension in EFL education is foundational. According to Anderson and Pearson (1984), reading comprehension is not merely the ability to decode words but involves constructing meaning from text, a skill essential for academic achievement and lifelong learning. The relevance of this skill is

amplified in vocational education, where students need to comprehend specialized texts related to their chosen fields.

### *Challenges in EFL Reading Comprehension*

EFL learners often face challenges in comprehending English texts due to linguistic and cultural differences (Lwin, 2017). In the context of vocational schools, these challenges may be intensified as students are required to engage with technical and discipline-specific content. Identifying effective strategies to overcome these challenges becomes crucial for educators.

Folktales have long been recognized as powerful tools for language learning and cultural understanding (Satriani, 2019). Incorporating folktales into language instruction can provide contextualized and engaging content, fostering a deeper connection to the language and promoting cultural awareness (Lantolf et al., 2014). This approach can be particularly beneficial in EFL settings, offering a bridge between language acquisition and cultural comprehension.

### *Folktale-Based Pedagogy in Language Instruction*

Research has shown that integrating folktales into language instruction positively impacts various language skills, including vocabulary acquisition, grammar comprehension, and oral proficiency (Hasanah & Ali, 2022). Additionally, the narrative structure of folktales can enhance reading comprehension by providing a context for understanding, which is crucial for EFL learners (Lwin, 2015).

While the integration of folktales in language instruction has been explored, limited studies specifically focus on its impact on reading comprehension in the EFL vocational school context. An empirical study demonstrated the positive effects of using folktales on reading comprehension among Indonesian EFL learners, suggesting the potential applicability of this approach to vocational school settings (Ratminingsih et al., 2020).

The cultural significance of folktales has the potential to elevate students' motivation and interest in reading. Educators play a key role in fostering a positive and effective learning environment and promoting a heightened sense of connection between students and the learning content Hasanah (2023). This aspect is particularly crucial in vocational education, where sustaining student engagement with subject-specific materials poses a frequent challenge. The integration of culturally familiar narratives is identified as a valuable strategy that can further contribute to creating a positive and effective learning environment.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study adopts a quantitative research method, employing a pre-experimental design with a one-group pre-test-post-test structure to evaluate the effectiveness of the folktale reading technique in enhancing the reading abilities of eleventh-grade students at SMK Tiwikrama Mamuju. The research process involves defining the population and

sample, specifying the research location and timeframe, selecting the research instrument, conducting data collection, and performing data analysis. The dependent variable assessed is students' reading abilities, recognized as a vital conduit for acquiring new ideas, facts, and experiences from textual sources, while the independent variable is the application of the folktale reading technique during the learning process.

The population comprises eleventh-grade students from three classes at SMK Tiwikrama Mamuju in the academic year 2022/2023, totaling 105 students. Utilizing a cluster sampling technique, a sample of 23 students from Class XI is selected for the research. The chosen research instrument is a Reading Test administered before and after the treatment, consisting of twenty multiple-choice questions and lasting for 90 minutes. This pre-test aims to gauge the students' baseline knowledge and reading abilities.

Data analysis involves scoring the students' test results based on predefined reading criteria and employing automated data analysis through Microsoft Excel's Data Analysis menu. These analytical approaches aim to comprehensively assess the impact of the folktale reading technique on the students' reading abilities.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The research focused on class XI, comprising 23 students, and employed a systematic approach encompassing pre-test, treatment, and post-test phases. The pre-test, administered before the folktale-based treatment, aimed to assess students' initial reading abilities. The researcher presented twenty multiple-choice questions to gauge their prior knowledge, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the students' baseline proficiency. Subsequently, the treatment phase unfolded over one month, spanning five meetings, each dedicated to teaching the scanning technique. Various folktale texts of West Sulawesi, Indonesia, such as "The Legend of Samba Paria," "The Origin of the Name Kampung Paummisang," "I Karake' Lette'," "The Origin of Mermaid," and "The Legend of Pamboang," were employed to engage students in focused reading activities, emphasizing the application of scanning techniques to enhance their reading skills.

Following the treatment phase, the post-test was administered to evaluate the effectiveness of the folktale technique in enhancing students' reading abilities. Similar to the pre-test, the post-test consisted of twenty multiple-choice questions, lasting for 90 minutes. The researcher aimed to measure any discernible improvements in students' reading abilities after the implementation of the folktale-based treatment. This structured approach allowed for a comprehensive assessment of the impact of the folktale technique on students' reading comprehension skills within the context of vocational education.

1. The comparison of the rate frequency and percentage of the Students' pre-test and post-test

**Table 1. The Rate Frequency and Percentage of the Students' Pre-Test and Post-Test**

No.	Classification	Score	Pre-test		Post-test	
			Freq.	Perc. (%)	Freq.	Perc. (%)
1	Very Good	85-100	0	0	10	43
2	Good	75-84	0	0	8	35
3	Fair	65-74	6	26	5	22
4	Poor	55-64	13	57	0	0
5	Very Poor	0-54	4	17	0	0
Total Score			23	100	23	100

Table 1 demonstrates a significant improvement in student performance following the treatment, with notable shifts in classification levels. The pre-test revealed 17% of students in the very poor category, decreasing to none in the post-test. The poor classification decreased from 57% to none, indicating enhancement. Similarly, the fair classification saw a shift from 26% to 22%. The good classification showed a considerable improvement from none in the pre-test to 35% in the post-test, while the very good classification increased to 43%. The data analysis highlights a positive impact on students' reading abilities across diverse classification levels. Additionally, a clear transformation in scoring distribution indicates the treatment's effectiveness, emphasizing a substantial improvement in student performance from predominantly poor scores in the pre-test to a dominance of very good scores in the post-test.

2. Comparison between Mean Score and Standard Deviation in pre-test and post-test

**Table 2. Mean Score and Standard Deviation of Students' Pre-Test and Post-Test**

Name	Pre-test	Post-test
Mean Score	48	75
Standard Deviation	11,85	7,37

Table 2 indicates a significant improvement in mean scores, revealing a noteworthy increase from 48 in the students' pre-test to 75 in the post-test. This substantial rise, amounting to a difference of 27, underscores the efficacy of the

applied folktale technique in enhancing students' reading skills. The discernible improvement observed before and after the implementation of the folktale technique leads to the conclusion that this strategy proves to be effective in fostering advancements in students' reading abilities.

### 3. Analysis T-test Value and T-table Value

**Table 3. Analysis T-test Value and T-table Value Students' Pre-Test and Post-Test**

Variable	T-Test Value	T-Table Value
Pre-test - Post-test	21,09	2,074

Table 3 highlights a considerable difference between the t-test (21.09) and the critical t-table value (2.074) at a 5% significance level. The substantial excess of the t-test value over the t-table value ( $21.09 > 2.074$ ) leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) and the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ). This clear-cut outcome emphasizes the statistical significance of the findings, affirming the efficacy of the folktale technique in enhancing students' reading abilities.

The observed improvements in students' performance, as delineated in the analyses of both Table 1 and Table 2, align consistently with prior research emphasizing the effectiveness of innovative teaching methods in bolstering reading comprehension. The positive impact of the folktale reading technique on students' classification scores echoes findings by Qodriani and Kardiansyah (2018), emphasizing the effectiveness of incorporating culturally relevant narratives in language instruction. Furthermore, the shift from a predominant presence in the "poor" classification in the pre-test to a dominance of "very good" scores in the post-test aligns with the research which emphasizes the significant positive effects of utilizing folktales in EFL reading instruction (Zamzami et al., 2023). These outcomes underscore the potential of incorporating folktale-based methods as a powerful tool in addressing diverse reading abilities among students, ultimately contributing to more equitable and enhanced language learning outcomes.

The evident improvement in mean scores, as depicted in Table 2, resonates with previous research affirming the positive impact of innovative teaching strategies on students' academic performance. The substantial increase from a pre-test mean score of 48 to a post-test mean score of 75 reflects the effectiveness of integrating the folktale technique into the instructional approach. This outcome resonates with research findings that emphasize the crucial role of engaging teaching methods in enhancing students' motivation and academic achievement (Rahman et al., 2023). Furthermore, the considerable difference of 27 points between the pre-test and post-test mean scores

echoes the findings of Enni and Riana (2019), underlining the significance of employing innovative approaches to elicit measurable improvements in student learning outcomes. These results underscore the pedagogical value of the folktale technique in not only elevating mean scores but also in contributing to a substantial and quantifiable enhancement in students' reading skills.

The substantial difference between the t-test (21.09) and the critical t-table value (2.074), as elucidated in the presented data, underscores the statistical significance of the research findings. This observation aligns with the findings of Laher (2016), who emphasized the importance of statistical rigor in educational research to draw reliable conclusions. The remarkable discrepancy in values, with the t-test greatly exceeding the critical t-table value, solidifies the rejection of the null hypothesis (H0) and the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (H1). This is consistent with the research by (Gay & Mills, 2018), which demonstrated that when the calculated t-test value surpasses the critical t-table value, it signifies a meaningful impact of the intervention under study. In essence, the statistical analysis affirms the efficacy of the folktale technique in enhancing students' reading abilities, providing robust support for the alternative hypothesis.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the analysis of the data presented in this study revealed a significant difference between the t-test value (21.09) and the critical t-table value (2.074) at a 5% significance level. This discrepancy led to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H0) and the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (H1), indicating that the implementation of the folktale technique effectively improved the Reading Comprehension of eleventh-grade students at SMK Tiwikrama Mamuju.

Moving forward, it is recommended that teachers carefully select teaching methods consistent with their educational goals, fostering flexibility and practical experience, especially in reading instruction. The incorporation of the folktale technique in reading classes is encouraged to enhance students' interest in learning. This research contributes valuable insights to the field of education, particularly in the application of guided reading strategies. Future research endeavors should focus on developing optimal methods for improving Reading Comprehension, building upon the findings of this study.

## REFERENCES

- Ali, S. M. (2022). *Reading, Must be Fluent!* Eureka Media Aksara. <https://repository.penerbiteurka.com/publications/558687/>
- Allington, R. L., & McGill-Franzen, A. M. (2021). Reading volume and reading achievement: A review of recent research. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 56, S231–S238.

- Anderson, R. C., & Pearson, P. D. (1984). A schema-theoretic view of basic processes in reading comprehension. *Handbook of Reading Research*, 1, 255–291.
- Aswad, M., & Sardi, A. (2023). The Discourse Analysis of Diction Effects on Teachers Used in Teaching English as a Foreign Language. *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 15(2), 2647-2654.
- Bakti, H., & Ali, S. M. (2023). A Critical Review on the “Natural Order” of the Morpheme Acquisition: Three major Antithetical Views. *Inspiring: English Education Journal*, 6(2), 182–188.
- Enni, E., & Riana, D. (2019). Increasing Students’ Reading Comprehension in Descriptive Text through Reading Guide Method. *JURNAL EDUKASI NONFORMAL*, 1(1), 239–247.
- Gay, L. R., & Mills, G. E. (2018). Educational Research: Competencies for Analysis and Application (12th ed). In *Educational Research*.
- Hasanah, N. (2023). Penggunaan Materi Berbasis Budaya Lokal dalam Meningkatkan Keterampilan Menulis Bahasa Inggris Siswa SMP pada Procedure Text. In *Menggagas Nilai-Nilai Kearifan Lokal Melalui Etnopedagogik* (pp. 171–184). IAIN Parepare Nusantara Press.
- Hasanah, N., & Ali, S. M. (2022). Personal Vocabulary Notes (PVN) Method Affects The Students’ Vocabulary Mastery at IAIN Parepare. *Jurnal Ilmiah Multidisiplin Amsir*, 1(1), 67–74. <http://journal.stieamsir.ac.id/index.php/abrj/article/view/155>
- Laher, S. (2016). Ostinato rigore: Establishing methodological rigour in quantitative research. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 46(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0081246316649121>
- Lantolf, J. P., Thorne, S. L., & Poehner, M. E. (2014). Sociocultural theory and second language development. In *Theories in second language acquisition* (pp. 221–240). Routledge.
- Lwin, S. M. (2015). Using folktales for language teaching. *The English Teacher*, 44(2).
- Lwin, S. M. (2017). Asian folktales for teaching english in Asia. *Journal of Asia TEFL*, 14(4). <https://doi.org/10.18823/asiatefl.2017.14.4.12.773>
- Maltepe, S. (2016). An analysis of the critical reading levels of pre-service Turkish and literature teachers. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 16(63), 169–184.
- Moon, R. C., & Kwan, S. H. (2022). Improving students’ intensive reading ability by using survey-question-read-review-recite-reflect method. *JELITA*, 3(1), 12–21.
- Noviasmy, Y., Hasanah, N., & Dalle, A. (2023). Applying Quizizz Application as an Assessment Tool for EFL Students. *Inspiring: English Education Journal*, 6(1), 12–22. <https://doi.org/10.35905/INSPIRING.V6I1.4835>
- Qodriani, L. U., & Kardiansyah, M. Y. (2018). Exploring culture in Indonesia English textbook for secondary education. *JPI (Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia)*, 7(1), 51–58.

- Rahman, A., Ali, S. M., & Badriah. (2022). Integrating Local Culture-Based Instruction in Teaching Speaking Classroom at the Third Semester Students of Universitas Tomakaka Mamuju. *Inspiring: English Education Journal*, 5(1), 64–72.
- Rahman, A., Enni, E., Ali, S. M., & Badriah, B. (2023). An Enhancing Students Reading Comprehension by Using Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC). *Edumaspul: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 7(2), 5412–5416.
- Ratminingsih, N. M., Budasi, I. G., & Kurnia, W. D. A. (2020). Local Culture-Based Storybook and Its Effect on Reading Competence. *International Journal of Instruction*, 13(2), 253–268.
- Satriani, I. (2019). Storytelling in teaching literacy: Benefits and challenges. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, 8(1), 113–120.
- Zamzami, M. I., Krenata, N. A. C., & Rohmana, W. I. M. (2023). The Use of Poetry in English Learning for Islamic Junior High School Students. *JELITA*, 4(1), 1–8.