
**INVESTIGATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF QUESTION-
GENERATION STRATEGY IN ENHANCING NARRATIVE
TEXT COMPREHENSION AMONG EFL LEARNERS**

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ABSTRACT

Many students struggle with reading comprehension because they do not know how to identify key information, are less engaged in learning, and have limited exposure to interactive strategies. This study examined the effect of the question-generation strategy on ninth-grade students' comprehension of narrative texts at MTsN 2 Agam. Employing a quasi-experimental non-equivalent control group design, the research involved 122 students across five classes, with two classes selected: IX.1 (25 students) as the experimental group and IX.2 (24 students) as the control group. The experimental group received instruction through the question-generation strategy, while the control group was taught using conventional methods. Reading comprehension was assessed using a multiple-choice test, and the data were analyzed through normality and homogeneity checks, followed by paired-sample and independent-sample t-tests. The findings revealed a significant effect of the intervention, with the experimental group achieving greater gains from pre-test to post-test compared to the control group (Sig. < 0.05). These results suggest that the question-generation strategy effectively enhances reading comprehension and encourages more active and meaningful learning in EFL classrooms.

Keyword : *Question-generation strategy, reading comprehension*

INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension plays a crucial role in the development of language proficiency, particularly for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It enables readers to extract and construct meaning from written texts by integrating textual information with their background knowledge (Nunan, 2003). In academic contexts, effective reading comprehension not only supports students' learning across subjects but also fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Widayanti et al., 2025). However, in many EFL settings,

students still struggle to process information deeply, especially when texts are linguistically or culturally distant from their everyday experience (Brown, 2022).

Reading comprehension is defined as the capacity to connect prior knowledge with textual information to construct meaning. According to (Brassell, D & Rasinski, 2008), it is an active process requiring readers to apply existing knowledge and engage with the text to interpret its meaning. Theoretically, this process can be explained through Schema Theory, which emphasizes the role of background knowledge in understanding texts, and the Construction-Integration Model, which explains how readers build coherent mental representations by integrating new textual information with prior knowledge (Islamiah et al., 2017). Readers demonstrate comprehension when they can accurately interpret, recall, and explain a text's ideas based on both explicit and implicit information.

One instructional approach that has shown promise in enhancing reading comprehension is the question-generation strategy. Nunan (2003) describes reading strategies as the techniques readers employ to facilitate comprehension. The question-generation strategy, as defined by Sharon Look et al., (2002), encourages students to formulate and answer meaningful questions about a text's main ideas while reading. This active engagement promotes self-monitoring and deeper processing.

According to Langenberg (2000), the question generation strategy includes 4 steps: 1) Teachers ask children to generate questions during the reading of a passage. The questions should integrate information across different parts of the passage. 2) Teachers ask children to evaluate their questions about whether the questions covered important material, were integrative and could be answered based on what is in the text. 3) Teachers provide feedback on the quality of the questions asked or assist students in answering the questions generated. 4) Teacher teach the students to evaluate whether their questions covered important information, whether the questions were integrative, and whether they themselves could answer the questions. Similarly, (Al-Ahdal & Alolaywi, 2022) reported that incorporating metacognitive reading strategies, including question-generation, enhanced undergraduate EFL learners' ability to process and retain information.

There are some texts that will be learned by students based on the lesson plan. Narrative text is one of them. According to (Gerot-Wignell, 2013), Narrative text is a text to amuse, entertain and to deal with actual or vicarious experience in different ways. Narrative text is a kind of text that retells the story in the past tense. The purpose of the text is to entertain or to amuse the readers about the story (Han & Choi, 2018).

Despite evidence supporting this approach, classroom observations and interviews conducted in October at MTsN 2 Agam revealed persistent challenges. Among the eighth-grade classes (VIII.1–VIII.5), many students read passively without integrating information, were unaware of whether they truly understood a text, and had difficulty recalling main ideas. Instruction was largely limited to conventional teacher-led explanations, with little emphasis on active learning strategies. These issues mirror broader trends in Indonesian EFL classrooms, where traditional methods often dominate and learner engagement remains low (Widayanti et al., 2025). However, few local studies have empirically tested the question-generation strategy in junior high school contexts, creating a gap this research seeks to address.

METHOD

The purpose of this study were as follows: to determine whether there is a significant effect of using the question generation strategy toward students reading comprehension at ninth grade in MTsN 2 Agam, to determine whether there is a significant difference between the class that uses the question generation strategy and the class that does not use the question generation strategy toward students reading comprehension at ninth grade in MtsN 2 Agam, and to determine whether the reading comprehension of students who use the question generation strategy is better than students who do not use the question generation strategy.

This study employed a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental non-equivalent control group design (Creswell, 2014). This design was chosen because the research was conducted in intact classes where random assignment of individual students was not feasible. Although this design may involve threats to internal validity such as selection bias, these were minimized by conducting pre-test equivalence checks between the groups. The study was conducted at MTsN 2 Agam with ninth-grade students in the 2023/2024 academic year. The population consisted of 122 students in five classes. Using cluster sampling of intact classes, two were selected: Class IX.1 as the experimental group (25 students) and Class IX.2 as the control group (24 students), with the selection considering comparability of prior academic performance based on teacher input.

The experimental group was taught using the question-generation strategy, implemented following the four steps described by (Langenberg, 2000) and (Sharon Look et al., 2002). First, students generated questions while reading passages, integrating information across parts of the text. Second, they evaluated their questions for coverage of important ideas and

answerability. Third, the teacher provided feedback and guided students in refining their questions. Finally, students reflected on the quality and completeness of their questions. The control group received reading instruction using conventional methods, which primarily involved teacher explanations, vocabulary discussion, and answering comprehension questions from the textbook. To maintain consistency, lesson plans were prepared, and the implementation was monitored using observation notes.

The instrument was a reading comprehension test consisting of 20 multiple-choice items developed by the researcher. The test was designed to assess different levels of comprehension, including literal and inferential understanding. Content validity was reviewed by English teachers, and the items were based on curriculum-relevant texts. Both groups completed a pre-test before the intervention and a post-test after the intervention, with the same test format used for both but containing different yet equivalent items to reduce test familiarity effects. Data were analyzed using normality and homogeneity tests, followed by paired-sample *t*-tests to compare pre-test and post-test scores within groups and independent-sample *t*-tests to compare post-test scores between groups. Statistical significance was determined at Sig. (2-tailed) < 0.05 (et al., 2018).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This section presents the results of the study in a systematic manner, beginning with the descriptive statistics of the pre-test and post-test, followed by the normality and homogeneity tests, and concluding with the hypothesis testing.

Pre-Test and Post-Test of the Experimental Class

Before the treatment, the experimental group was given a pre-test to assess their initial reading comprehension ability. After the implementation of the question generation strategy, the students were administered a post-test to evaluate their progress. The detailed results of the experimental class are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: The Scores of Pre-Test and Post-Test of the Experimental Class

Students	Pre-test	Post-test	Gained score
1	30	70	40
2	35	50	15
3	20	50	30
4	50	60	10
5	30	75	45
6	35	75	40

7	40	55	15
8	45	55	10
9	30	55	25
10	40	75	35
11	45	50	5
12	60	90	30
13	45	60	15
14	50	70	20
15	40	60	20
16	55	60	5
17	40	55	15
18	30	45	15
19	35	80	45
20	30	60	30
21	40	70	30
22	55	70	15
23	40	70	30
24	35	65	30
25	35	80	45

To provide a clearer overview, the descriptive statistics are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Pre-Test and Post-Test of the Experimental Class

	Min	Max	Mean	Median	Standard deviation	Variance
Pre-test	20	60	39.60	40.00	9.456	89.417
Post-test	45	90	64.20	60.00	11.336	128.500

As shown in Table 2, the mean score of the experimental class in the pre-test was 39.60, with a minimum of 20 and a maximum of 60. After the treatment, the mean score increased to 64.20, with a minimum of 45 and a maximum of 90. This improvement of nearly 25 points indicates that the students in the experimental class benefited considerably from the strategy.

Pre-Test and Post-Test of the Control Class

The same procedure was applied in the control class, which was taught using conventional instruction without the question generation strategy. The pre-test and post-test scores of this class are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: The Scores of Pre-Test and Post-Test of the Control Class

Students	Pre-test	Post-test	Gained score
1	45	55	10
2	25	35	10
3	35	40	5
4	35	45	10
5	50	65	15
6	30	40	10
7	20	25	5

8	70	80	10
9	25	45	20
10	50	55	5
11	30	80	50
12	50	55	5
13	70	80	10
14	55	70	15
15	35	45	10
16	30	45	15
17	40	45	5
18	20	25	5
19	40	55	15
20	40	60	20
21	35	40	5
22	55	65	10
23	30	50	20
24	40	45	5

The descriptive statistics are provided in Table 4.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Pre-Test and Post-Test of the Control Class

	Min	Max	Mean	Median	Standard deviation	Variance
Pre-test	20	70	39.79	37.50	13.711	187.998
Post-test	25	80	51.88	47.50	15.591	243.071

Based on Table 4, the mean pre-test score of the control class was 39.79, which increased to 51.88 in the post-test. Although there was an improvement of about 12 points, the gain was notably smaller compared to the experimental class. This suggests that while conventional instruction led to some progress, it was not as effective as the question generation strategy in improving students' reading comprehension.

Normality Test

Before conducting hypothesis testing, the normality of the data was examined using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests. The results are presented in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5: Normality Test of Pre-Test Scores

		Tests of Normality					
Class		Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Reading test	Pre-test Experimental Class	.163	25	.085	.957	25	.362
	Pre-test Control Class	.161	24	.111	.935	24	.128

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

It could be seen that the significance of normality pre-test score in experimental class was $0.085 > 0.05$. Meanwhile, the significance of normality pre-test score in control class was $0.111 > 0.05$. So, it could be concluded that the data of pre-test in experimental and control class were normally distributed.

Table 6: Normality Test of Post-Test Scores

	Class	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
Reading test	Post-test Experimental Class	.164	25	.079	.959	25	.401
	Post-test Control Class	.170	24	.070	.942	24	.181

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

It could be seen that the significance of normality post-test score in experimental class was $0.079 > 0.05$. meanwhile, the significance of normality post-test score in control class was $0.70 > 0.05$. So, it could be concluded that the data of post-test in experimental and control class are normally distributed.

Homogeneity Test

In addition to normality, the homogeneity of variance was tested to determine whether the two groups had equal variances. The results of Levene's Test are displayed in Tables 7 and 8.

Table 7: Homogeneity Test of Pre-Test Scores

Test of Homogeneity of Variance					
		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Reading test	Based on Mean	2.682	1	47	.108
	Based on Median	2.602	1	47	.113
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	2.602	1	41.526	.114
	Based on trimmed mean	2.659	1	47	.110

From table, it was found that the significance value (sig) based on mean is $0.108 > 0.05$, it can be concluded that the variant of the pre-test of experimental class and control class is the same.

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Reading test	Based on Mean	1.790	1	47	.187
	Based on Median	1.287	1	47	.262
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.287	1	42. 694	.263
	Based on trimmed mean	1.790	1	47	.187

The results show that the significance values for both pre-test (0.108) and post-test (0.187) were greater than 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data of the experimental and control classes were homogeneous, allowing for meaningful comparisons between the two groups.

Hypothesis Testing

This stage of analysis aimed to verify whether the application of the question generation strategy produced a significant effect on students' reading comprehension. Three hypotheses were tested: (1) the effect of the strategy within the experimental class (paired-sample test), (2) the comparison between the experimental and control classes (independent-sample test), and (3) the superiority of the experimental class in terms of mean post-test scores. The detailed results are presented below.

First Hypothesis (Paired Samples Test in the Experimental Class)

The first hypothesis examined whether there was a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental class. This test was conducted to determine the effectiveness of the question generation strategy in improving students' reading comprehension within the same group. The results are presented in Table 9.

		Paired Differences				T	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pre- test - Post -test	- 24.6000 0	12.57643	2.5152 9	- 29.7913 0	- 19.4087 0	- 9.78 0	2 4 0	.000

As shown in Table 9, the mean difference between the pre-test and post-test was -24.60, with a significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05). This indicates that the post-test scores were

significantly higher than the pre-test scores in the experimental class. In other words, the application of the question generation strategy contributed meaningfully to the students' improvement. The large negative t-value (-9.780) further reflects a consistent increase in scores after the treatment. These findings confirm that the strategy had a substantial positive effect on reading comprehension when implemented in the experimental group, thereby rejecting H_0 and accepting H_a .

Second Hypothesis (Independent Samples Test of Post-Test Scores)

The second hypothesis investigated whether there was a significant difference in post-test performance between the experimental class, which was taught using the question generation strategy, and the control class, which received conventional instruction. This test compared the effectiveness of the two different teaching approaches. The results are summarized in Table 10.

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	
Post-test	Equal variances assumed	1.790	.187	3.175	47	.003	12.32500	3.88239	4.51464	20.13536
	Equal variances not assumed			3.154	41.922	.003	12.32500	3.90742	4.43907	20.21093

The results in Table 10 demonstrate that the significance value was 0.003 (< 0.05), confirming that there was a statistically significant difference in post-test scores between the two groups. The mean difference of 12.33 points shows that the experimental class outperformed the control class by a considerable margin. These findings strongly support the conclusion that the use of the question generation strategy was more effective in enhancing

reading comprehension than conventional methods. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

Third Hypothesis (Comparison of Mean Scores)

The third hypothesis focused on the comparison of mean post-test scores between the experimental and control classes. This comparison provided further evidence of the effectiveness of the strategy in a broader sense. The results of the independent samples test are presented below.

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	
Pos t- test	Equal varian ces assum ed	1.7 90	.18 7	3.1 75	47	.003	12.3250 0	3.88239	4.514 64	20.135 36
	Equal varian ces not assum ed			3.1 54	41.9 22	.003	12.3250 0	3.90742	4.439 07	20.210 93

The results reveal that the experimental class achieved a higher mean post-test score of 64.20 compared to the control class mean of 51.88. This difference, which was statistically significant ($p = 0.003 < 0.05$), highlights the superiority of the question generation strategy in fostering reading comprehension. The higher average gain in the experimental class (24.60 points from pre-test to post-test) compared to the control class (12.09 points) further strengthens this conclusion. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted, confirming that students who were taught using the question generation strategy achieved better reading comprehension outcomes than those who were not.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the use of the question-generation strategy significantly improved students' reading comprehension. In the experimental class, the mean score increased from 39.60 in the pre-test to 64.20 in the post-test, with a mean gain of 24.60 points. The paired-samples t-test showed $\text{Sig. (2-tailed)} = 0.000 < 0.05$, indicating a statistically significant improvement. Furthermore, the independent-samples t-test comparing post-test scores between the experimental and control classes yielded $\text{Sig. (2-tailed)} = 0.003$, confirming that students taught using the question-generation strategy outperformed those taught through conventional methods. These results suggest that incorporating question-generation into reading instruction can effectively enhance comprehension skills.

These results align with previous theoretical perspectives and empirical findings. According to Sharon Look et al. (2002), the question-generation strategy involves readers actively asking and answering meaningful questions during reading, thereby fostering deeper understanding of the text. Furthermore, Khansir & Dashti (2014), question generation strategy is designed to help students effectively understand complex reading demands. Nurhailis (2013) found significant gains in reading comprehension among second-year students at MA Islamic Centre Al-Hidayah Kampar, while Khansir & Dashti (2014) reported similar results with Iranian EFL high school learners. The present study corroborates these findings by demonstrating comparable or greater effects, possibly due to the targeted application of the strategy over the research period.

The effectiveness of the question-generation strategy in this study can be understood through several theoretical lenses. First, it aligns with schema theory, which posits that comprehension improves when learners activate prior knowledge and connect it to new information. Generating questions prompts students to recall and apply relevant schemas while reading. Second, from a metacognitive perspective, this strategy encourages learners to monitor their understanding, identify gaps, and seek clarification, thus promoting active processing. Third, it may reduce extraneous cognitive load by directing attention to key ideas, enabling better integration of textual information into long-term memory (Ma et al., 2023).

For educators, these findings highlight the practical value of integrating question-generation activities into reading lessons. Teachers can guide students to create questions before, during, and after reading, encouraging deeper engagement with texts. This approach not only enhances comprehension but also fosters critical thinking and learner autonomy. In line with Amanda & Dewi (2021), reading becomes one of the language skills that must be

mastered by the learner to get information from books or texts that were used to enrich their knowledge.

While the improvements observed are promising, certain limitations should be acknowledged. The quasi-experimental design limits the ability to draw definitive causal conclusions. The sample size was relatively small, and the research was conducted in a single school, which may affect generalizability. Additionally, the study did not assess long-term retention of reading gains (Sun et al., 2021). Future research could address these issues by employing randomized controlled trials, involving larger and more diverse populations, and including follow-up assessments to examine sustained effects.

In conclusion, the results support the assertion that the question-generation strategy can significantly improve students' reading comprehension, as evidenced by higher post-test scores in the experimental group compared to the control group. This is consistent with the perspectives of Putri & Melani (2022), Nasir et al. (2022), Sya'ban & Reflinda (2021), and Wilda et al. (2024), who emphasize that reading comprehension involves not only decoding text but also processing and interpreting meaning. By promoting active engagement and deeper understanding, question-generation serves as an effective instructional strategy in EFL contexts.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study concludes that the question-generation strategy has a significant positive effect on students' reading comprehension, as it encourages learners to actively engage with texts, monitor their understanding, and construct deeper meaning. The findings support schema theory, metacognitive approaches, and cognitive load perspectives, showing that generating questions fosters critical thinking and enhances comprehension more effectively than conventional instruction. For teachers, integrating question-generation into reading lessons is highly recommended to promote learner autonomy and sustained engagement. Future research should extend this work by involving larger and more diverse populations and examining long-term impacts to strengthen its applicability in broader educational contexts.

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