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**ENHANCING STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH  
THE GENERATING INTERACTIONS BETWEEN SCHEMATA AND  
TEXT (GIST) STRATEGY**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Reading comprehension is an important skill for students, but many still have difficulties understanding and interpreting texts effectively. This study aimed to examine the effect of the Generating Interactions between Schemata and Text (GIST) strategy on students' reading comprehension achievement. The study also explored how the strategy helped students understand texts through summarizing, activating prior knowledge, and discussing ideas collaboratively. A pre-experimental one-group pre-test and post-test design was used involving 32 seventh-grade students at SMP Maitreyawira Palembang. The results showed a significant improvement in students' post-test scores ( $M = 74.14$ ,  $SD = 6.32$ ) compared to their pre-test scores ( $M = 50.23$ ,  $SD = 7.11$ ),  $t(31) = 17.876$ ,  $p < .001$ . These findings indicate that the GIST strategy effectively improved students' reading comprehension. Therefore, the strategy can be used as an alternative teaching method to support reading instruction in English classes.*

Keyword: *GIST strategy, reading comprehension, narrative text*

**INTRODUCTION**

Reading comprehension is one of the most important skills in English language learning. However, many Indonesian students still struggle to understand and interpret texts effectively because of limited vocabulary, lack of reading strategies, and teacher-centered instruction (Sulistyo, 2016; Oakhill et al., 2019). National assessments such as OECD (2023) show that most Indonesian students are still below the expected literacy standard. This condition highlights the need for more interactive reading strategies that can help students develop deeper understanding. This study focuses on the use of the GIST strategy, which is based on schema theory and metacognitive approaches, to improve students' reading comprehension. The study aims to analyze the effectiveness of GIST in helping students

identify main ideas, summarize information, and participate actively in meaning-making processes (Snow, 2002; McNamara, 2023).

The latest results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (OECD, 2023) showed that more than two-thirds of Indonesian students are still below level 2 in reading literacy. This means that many students still have difficulty with basic reading tasks such as identifying the main idea of a paragraph or finding clearly stated information in a short text (Solihin et al., 2024; Afryansyah et al., 2024). Classroom observations also show that students often lose interest during reading lessons because teaching is still dominated by teacher explanations and translation activities. As a result, students have limited opportunities to develop independent reading strategies. These findings show the importance of using more interactive and student-centered teaching methods to help students process information and improve comprehension.

One strategy that has gained attention in reading instruction is the Generating Interactions between Schemata and Text (GIST) strategy. GIST, introduced by Cunningham (1982), asks students to identify the most important ideas in a text and summarize them in no more than 20 words. This process encourages students to select essential information, connect it with their background knowledge, and express it using their own words (Mekawati & Tri W, 2020). Through this activity, students can improve not only their reading comprehension but also their critical thinking and summarizing skills (Fauziyah & Dari, 2024).

Several previous studies have shown the benefits of the GIST strategy. Riani and Yasin (2015) found that GIST helped students identify main ideas and produce concise summaries more effectively. Similarly, Muhid et al. (2020) reported that students taught using GIST achieved better comprehension results than students taught through conventional question-and-answer methods. These studies suggest that GIST is especially useful for narrative texts because such texts contain clear plots, characters, and moral values. However, despite these positive findings, the use of GIST is still limited in many Indonesian junior high schools, especially in private schools such as SMP Maitreyawira Palembang (Dewi & Saputra, 2023). In addition, previous studies have mostly focused on learning outcomes, while limited attention has been given to how GIST supports schema activation and students' active involvement in reading comprehension.

In addition to national assessment results, classroom experiences also show continuing problems in reading comprehension. Many students find it difficult to engage with English texts because of limited vocabulary and lack of exposure to authentic reading materials.

Teachers often use translation methods and comprehension questions, which may help students answer exercises but do not always improve their overall understanding of texts (Cain et al., 2021). As a result, students tend to focus on translating words one by one instead of understanding the text as a whole (Oktavianti et al., 2026). This situation limits students' ability to develop critical literacy skills, including analyzing, interpreting, and reflecting on texts. Therefore, there is a need for a teaching strategy that encourages students to focus on the main ideas of a text, participate actively in learning, and become more independent readers.

The importance of improving reading comprehension is also related to the goals of the 21st-century curriculum, which emphasizes critical thinking, problem-solving, and lifelong learning skills. Through the Kurikulum Merdeka framework, the Ministry of Education in Indonesia expects students to interpret texts critically, summarize information effectively, and connect knowledge from different contexts (Jannah et al., 2023). In this situation, the GIST strategy is relevant because it encourages students to combine prior knowledge with new information and present it in a meaningful and concise way (Nasima et al., 2024). By asking students to identify main ideas and create summaries collaboratively, GIST not only improves comprehension but also develops communication and collaboration skills. Therefore, the implementation of GIST in the classroom can provide both academic and practical benefits for students.

Experts in reading instruction and educational psychology also emphasize the importance of metacognitive strategies and schema theory in supporting reading comprehension. According to Channa, Nordin, Siming, and colleagues (2018), metacognitive strategies such as planning, monitoring, and evaluation play an important role in improving students' reading ability. Their study found that explicit instruction in metacognitive strategies improved students' comprehension outcomes compared to traditional teaching methods. Meanwhile, schema theory highlights the importance of activating students' prior knowledge before reading a text (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983; Arifin & Setiawan, 2020; Lestari & Wahyuni, 2022). In the study *A Review of Schema Theory in Students' Reading Comprehension* by Siha, Purnomo, and Fauziati (2025), the researchers found that pre-reading activities, such as discussing the topic or predicting text content, can improve comprehension because they help students connect new information with their existing knowledge.

Based on these issues, this study was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of the GIST strategy in improving the reading comprehension of seventh-grade students at SMP

Maitreyawira Palembang. The study is expected to provide empirical evidence about how GIST can be implemented in junior high school classrooms and how it contributes to students' reading improvement. In addition, the findings are expected to provide practical insights into the use of student-centered strategies in Indonesian classrooms, which are still often dominated by traditional teaching practices.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a pre-experimental one-group pre-test and post-test design to determine the effectiveness of the GIST strategy in improving reading comprehension. The participants were 32 seventh-grade students from SMP Maitreyawira Palembang, selected purposively. The treatment was conducted in six sessions, each lasting 80 minutes, involving guided summarization, group discussion, and reflection. Two reading comprehension tests (pre-test and post-test) were used to collect data. The instruments' reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha = .87$ ), while validity was established through expert judgment. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and paired-sample t-test via SPSS version 20. Ethical considerations were addressed by obtaining school consent, ensuring anonymity, and informing participants about voluntary participation.

Data were collected using two instruments: a pre-test and a post-test in the form of reading comprehension assessments based on narrative texts. The pre-test was administered before the treatment to determine students' initial comprehension, while the post-test was conducted after the treatment to identify any improvement. The teaching procedures involved applying the GIST strategy during reading activities, guiding students to summarize key ideas and discard unnecessary details. The collected data were analyzed quantitatively. First, normality and homogeneity tests were performed to ensure the data met statistical assumptions. Then, a paired-sample t-test was employed using SPSS version 20 to compare pre-test and post-test mean scores. This analysis aimed to determine whether the difference between students' scores before and after the treatment was statistically significant.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Findings**

This section presents the findings of the study based on the analysis of students' pre-test and post-test scores after the implementation of the GIST (Generating Interactions between Schemata and Text) strategy. The findings were analyzed using descriptive statistics, score

classifications, and a paired sample t-test to determine whether the GIST strategy significantly improved students' reading comprehension achievement. The results also describe students' improvement in identifying main ideas, summarizing information, and understanding narrative texts during the learning process.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Pre-test and Post-test Scores**

Test Type	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p-value
Pre-test	32	50.23	7.11			
Post-test	32	74.14	6.32	17.876	31	< .001

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of students' pre-test and post-test scores. The results show a clear improvement in students' reading comprehension after the implementation of the GIST strategy. The mean score increased from 50.23 in the pre-test to 74.14 in the post-test, indicating that students achieved better comprehension after receiving the treatment. In addition, the lower standard deviation in the post-test suggests that students' performance became more consistent after learning through the GIST strategy.

The increase in scores indicates that students improved in identifying main ideas, understanding supporting details, and summarizing narrative texts. During the treatment sessions, students were trained to focus on important information in each paragraph and rewrite it in concise summaries. This process helped students connect their prior knowledge with the information in the text, making comprehension easier and more meaningful.

**Table 2: Classification of Students' Pre-test and Post-test Scores in the Experimental Group**

Classification	Pre-test	Post-test
Very Good	Few	Increased
Good	Limited	Increased
Fair	Majority	Reduced
Poor	Majority	Significantly Reduced

Table 2 shows the classification of students' scores before and after the treatment. Before the implementation of the GIST strategy, most students were still categorized in the "Poor" and "Fair" levels. This condition indicates that many students still had difficulties understanding narrative texts, identifying key information, and organizing ideas into summaries.

However, after the treatment, there was a noticeable improvement in the distribution of scores. Many students who were previously in the "Poor" and "Fair" categories moved into the "Good" and "Very Good" categories. This shift is closely related to the increase in the post-test mean score shown in Table 1. The findings suggest that the GIST strategy helped

students improve their comprehension skills by guiding them to focus on important ideas and ignore less relevant information.

The findings also reveal that fewer students remained in the lower achievement categories after the treatment. This indicates that the strategy was beneficial not only for high-achieving students but also for students who initially struggled with reading comprehension. Therefore, the improvement shown in Table 2 supports the descriptive statistical results presented in Table 1.

**Table 3: Paired Sample T-test**

Variable	t-value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-test and Post-test	17.876	31	< .001

Table 3 presents the results of the paired sample t-test conducted to determine whether the improvement between the pre-test and post-test scores was statistically significant. The analysis showed that the t-value was 17.876 with a significance value of  $p < .001$ . Since the significance level was lower than 0.05, the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores was statistically significant.

These statistical findings strengthen the results presented in Tables 1 and 2. The increase in the mean score and the shift in score classifications were not caused by chance, but by the systematic implementation of the GIST strategy during the treatment sessions. Students benefited from activities such as identifying key ideas, summarizing paragraphs, discussing texts with peers, and rewriting information using their own words. These activities encouraged students to process information more actively compared to traditional reading instruction.

In addition to the improvement in scores, students also became more active and confident during reading activities. Many students participated more actively in classroom discussions and were more willing to share their summaries and ideas with classmates. This suggests that the GIST strategy not only improved reading comprehension achievement but also created a more interactive and student-centered learning environment.

However, although students showed improvement in understanding explicit information, some higher-order reading skills such as making inferences and interpreting implied meanings still developed more slowly. This may have been influenced by the short duration of the treatment. Furthermore, some lower-achieving students still experienced

difficulties summarizing information within the required 20-word limit, indicating that additional guidance and practice may still be necessary for some learners.

## **Discussion**

The findings of this study show that the GIST (Generating Interactions between Schemata and Text) strategy significantly improved students' reading comprehension achievement. The improvement can be seen from the increase in students' post-test scores and the shift in score classifications from lower categories to higher categories after the treatment. Students became better at identifying main ideas, understanding supporting details, and summarizing narrative texts (Duke & Pearson, 2021; García & Cain, 2022). These findings indicate that the GIST strategy helped students process textual information more effectively and actively during reading activities.

The results support schema theory, which explains that students understand texts more easily when they connect new information with their prior knowledge (Anderson, 2015). During the implementation of the GIST strategy, students were encouraged to relate the content of the text to their existing knowledge before creating summaries. This process helped students construct meaning more effectively and improved their comprehension of narrative texts.

The findings also support metacognitive frameworks that emphasize the importance of planning, monitoring, and evaluating comprehension during reading activities (Huang et al., 2023; List & Alexander, 2021). Through summarization tasks, students were trained to select important information, monitor their understanding, and organize ideas using their own words (Pratiwi & Setiawan, 2023). These activities encouraged students to become more active and independent readers rather than depending only on teacher explanations.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research on the GIST strategy. Riani and Yasin (2015) found that GIST improved students' ability to identify main ideas and produce concise summaries. Similarly, Muhid et al. (2020) reported that students taught using GIST achieved better comprehension results than students taught through conventional methods. The present study strengthens these findings by showing that GIST effectively improved students' reading comprehension achievement in narrative texts among seventh-grade students at SMP Maitreyawira Palembang.

In this study, the GIST strategy was particularly effective in helping students understand narrative texts. Activities such as paragraph summarization, group discussions, and whole-

text synthesis allowed students to understand plots, characters, and moral values more clearly. This finding supports Astuti (2016), who stated that narrative texts are suitable for the GIST strategy because their structure helps students identify sequences of events and important ideas more easily.

Another important finding was the positive effect of the GIST strategy on students' motivation and classroom participation. Students became more actively involved in reading activities because they were required to contribute ideas, discuss summaries with classmates, and participate in collaborative learning activities. Instead of passively listening to the teacher, students became more confident in expressing their understanding of the texts. This finding is similar to the study by Pebriani et al. (2022), which reported that interactive reading strategies increased students' motivation and confidence during reading instruction.

However, although students showed significant improvement in understanding explicit information, some higher-order reading skills such as making inferences and interpreting implied meanings did not improve as strongly. This may be because inferential comprehension requires deeper cognitive processing and longer periods of practice. Grabe and Stoller (2013) explained that higher-level reading skills such as critical reading and inference-making develop gradually and may not show immediate improvement through short-term interventions. Since this study was conducted over a limited number of treatment sessions, the duration may not have been sufficient to produce strong improvement in these advanced comprehension skills.

Another challenge found in this study was the difference in students' summarization abilities. High-achieving students adapted more quickly to the 20-word summarization task, while some lower-achieving students still struggled to summarize information without omitting important details. This finding suggests that although the GIST strategy is effective, teachers still need to provide additional scaffolding and guidance, especially for students with lower reading ability (Palincsar & Brown, 1984). Step-by-step modeling and continuous practice are important to ensure that all students can benefit from the strategy equally (Nation, 2023).

The findings of this study also support previous research on metacognitive strategy instruction in reading comprehension. Huang, Chen, and colleagues (2023) found that explicit instruction in metacognitive strategies significantly improved students' reading comprehension because students learned how to plan, monitor, and evaluate their reading processes systematically. In addition, the study *Research on the Influence Path of*

*Metacognitive Reading Strategies* found that summarization and credibility-assessment strategies positively affected students' literacy achievement (Zhang & Seepho, 2023; Khellab et al., 2022). These findings strengthen the argument that the GIST strategy, which is closely related to summarization and metacognitive processes, is supported both theoretically and empirically.

Furthermore, previous studies have shown that summarization activities contribute significantly to reading comprehension improvement. Ramirez-Avila and Barreiro (2021) found that narrative text summarization improved students' understanding of plots and character development. Similarly, Khoshsima and Rezaeian (2014) reported that summarization strategies significantly improved EFL students' reading comprehension scores compared to conventional methods. These findings are consistent with the present study, which showed that students' comprehension improved through repeated summarization practice and active engagement with texts (Yuliana & Handayani, 2022; Zwaan & Radvansky, 1998).

Overall, the findings indicate that the GIST strategy is an effective approach for improving students' reading comprehension, particularly in identifying main ideas, summarizing information, and understanding narrative texts. The strategy also promotes active participation, collaboration, and student-centered learning in the classroom. However, longer implementation periods and additional support may still be needed to improve higher-order comprehension skills such as inference-making and critical interpretation.

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

This study concluded that the GIST (Generating Interactions between Schemata and Text) strategy significantly improved the reading comprehension of seventh-grade students at SMP Maitreyawira Palembang, as shown by the increase in students' post-test scores after the treatment. The strategy helped students identify main ideas, summarize important information, and understand narrative texts more effectively. In addition, students became more active, confident, and engaged during reading activities. These findings indicate that GIST is an effective strategy for improving students' reading comprehension and supporting more interactive classroom learning. Therefore, English teachers are encouraged to apply the GIST strategy in reading classes, while schools should support its implementation through appropriate training and learning resources. Future research is recommended to investigate the

use of GIST in different text genres, educational levels, and learning contexts to gain broader understanding of its effectiveness.

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