



Directed Reading Activity (DRA) method and students' Arabic reading comprehension: An experimental research

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Abstract

This research aimed to investigate the effect of using Directed Reading Activity (DRA) at one Islamic University in Indonesia. The respondents were 14 Indonesian students majoring in Arabic language. The design of the research is pre-experimental with one group pre-test and post-test design. The technique of collecting data was done by a reading comprehension test—the instrument was multiple test descriptions with four answer choices. The test had been performed in two parts that were Directed Reading Activity (DRA) method and reading comprehension achievement tests. Data analysis was done using the SPSS program (Statistical Program for Social Sciences). The tests measured how effective the Directed Reading Activity (DRA) method was to strengthen students' understanding of Arabic reading particularly for low and medium ability students. The research results show that the method of Directed Reading Activity is very positive in improving students understanding of Arabic reading.

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Introduction

Language has had an essential role in human life for a long time. Language is the mirror of human life which delineates the life of human (Soepardjo & Warsono, 2018). In addition, language also plays a very important role in the personality and social development of a person. Learning and mastering more than one language can develop a person's

cognitive and social skills (Bangga et al., 2015). The fact is that a person is able to transmit the language he has acquired intentionally or unintentionally to subsequent generations and language is acquired and transmitted (Moustafa & Younes, 2021). Through language skills, humans can communicate, transact, talk to each other about life and experiences, and learn and improve knowledge (cognitive) abilities. In short, all human activities require language and language skills.

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The main role of a language for humans is as a tool for thinking. The ability and wisdom of a human's thought are usually parallel to the language skill. Someone with high language skills is believed to have a better way of thinking. With the regularity of someone's language, the more common his way of thinking and understanding will be (Martius, 2018; Rohmawati & Mulyasari, 2019). Based on this concept, apart from Indonesian, various foreign languages are also studied and taught in multiple educational institutions. This starts from primary, secondary, and advanced education institutions, leading on to universities with various levels, such as diploma, bachelor, master, and doctorate. One language taught and studied comprehensively and in-depth in Indonesian educational institutions is Arabic, until eventually the Department of Arabic Language Education was opened.

For students of Arabic Language Education, using Arabic textbooks and references in lectures is often challenging or complex. The use of Arabic is not limited to linguistics courses and language skills but also groups of non-language proficiency courses, such as the group of literature courses, for example, the *Nushush al-Adab* course (Arabic language literature appreciation) and the group of cultural subjects, such as the History and Culture course. Islamic civilization also uses Arabic as do groups of religious subjects, such as Islamic Education (Mumtaz et al., 2024; Yusuf et al., 2023; 2024), *Tafsir al-Qur'an* and *Tafsir Hadith* (Mundzir et al., 2023), Fiqh, and Sufism. Thus, for students, Mastery of Arabic is an urgent matter, and mastering it well and meeting ideal standards are necessary, especially for students majoring in Arabic Language Education.

According to Mardiah, et.al in (Hizbullah et al., 2019), there are two formal-curricular in Islamic schools in Indonesia, (1) Classroom Arabic instruction: *Muthola'ah* (Arabic Reading), *Insya'* (Arabic Composition), *Nahwu* (Arabic Grammar), *Sharaf* (Arabic Conjugation), *Tamrin Lugah* (Arabic Workbook), *Muhadatsah* (Arabic Speaking Practice), etc; and (2) Classroom Islamic Studies instruction: Islamic Law, *Fiqih* (Islamic jurisprudence), *Ushul Fiqih* (Rasidin et al., 2024), *Tarikh Islam* (history of Islam), *Musthalah Hadits* (categorization of Hadith, Tarbiyah (education of morality, courtesy, culture, and behavior), etc.

One of the skills needed to understand the textbooks and Arabic references is reading comprehension. This is reinforced by Pangestika (2018) who explained

that reading is a critical skill needed by all students to increase knowledge and gather a lot of information. In simple terms, reading can be interpreted as an "activity to understand the strings of words in a reading" (Dakhi & Damanik, 2018; Munandar & Srimurni, 2021). In addition, Aerila and Merisuo-Storm (2017), said that "good reading skills are an essential part of everyday life".

In order to improve the reading ability, students of Arabic Language Education in Indonesia are given two reading courses, Basic Reading Skills (*Maharah Qira'ah 1*) and Advanced Reading Skills (*Maharah Qira'ah 2*). *Qiroah* learning is learning Arabic, which emphasizes aspects of students' reading ability, not only done out loud and in a loud voice, but also done by reading silently or silent reading (Aflisia et al., 2019). Learning reading skill aims to improve student's reading skill and understanding. Among the goals of learning Arabic is being able to read and understand classical Arabic books (Aflisia & Harahap, 2019). This achievement requires aspects of language, namely, reading abilities. However, the process of learning to read cannot stand alone. Still, it also requires several factors and linguistic elements, which include: sound (*ashwat/phonology*), writing (*kitabah al-huruf/ orthography*), grammar (*al-Sharaf*), sentence structure (*al-nahwu*), and vocabulary (*al-mufradat*) (Efendi, 2004; Febriana, 2021; Ma et al., 2022). Reading comprehension consists of five indicators, namely, the ability to identify the main idea, explicit information, implicit information, word references, and specific words based on their context.

Based on the results of pre-observation, which was during the first and second meetings of Advanced Reading Proficiency (*Maharah Qira'ah 2*) course, the researcher found the following: (1) students had low creativity and discipline in reading, seen in the lack of active participation during course and at time of pre-course as preparation for attending class; (2) students had difficulties understanding any reading text that was used as teaching material; (3) students liked to translate texts word by word, so their translation and reading comprehension are difficult to understand. This happens because they do not have much vocabulary; (4) most of the students are still confused in analyzing the grammatical structure contained in the text; (5) The strategy used by lecturers tends to be class variety or less interactive. Such had not helped students understanding the text, so the students are easily bored and reluctant to read; and

(6) the results of the initial reading ability diagnostic test are based on the knowledge and experience or treatment they get, which previously indicated that their reading skills were deficient and well below the minimum average required for graduation.

This failure is understandable because various reading topics presented in class are not or have never been accompanied by reading strategies and methods that can be used to approach the discourse. Not applying the right reading strategy causes the average student only to be able to read monotonously, applying the same reading style for each reading material. Even worse, students never know how to understand reading practically. Students tend to engage in ways they like.

Further studies reveal that the use of reading strategies is significantly positively correlated with the self-efficacy of reading. The study recommends developing the use of student reading strategies and reading self-efficacy beliefs while adopting an instructional program of reading strategies (Alsuhaiban, 2019). Referring to the reality stated above, in the capacity of lecturers who support courses, the researchers chose to carry out reading lectures by using Directed Reading Activity (DRA). The Directed Reading Activity (DRA) strategy adheres to the concept that reading is directed. This strategy is considered to have a close relationship with the idea and theory of reading comprehension. The selection of the Directed Reading Activity (DRA) the researchers chose to use in learning to read is also supported by several expert opinions. Among them, Stevens et al. (2017), argue that directed reading is possible for students who have learning support before and after reading. Sachs (1983) stated that readers carried out directed reading activities on a commercial basis since reading activities were structured to develop concepts, vocabulary, and understanding.

Directed Reading Activity (DRA) involves guided pre-reading, silent reading and spoken reading, comprehension, and word recognition or skill training or practice. Hasan (2018) argues that the Directed Reading Activity (DRA) strategy is a strategy that is considered appropriate to use if the learning aims to improve and strengthen students' vocabulary and reading skills. Based on this view, the researchers attempted to use the Direct Reading Activity (DRA) strategy in several sessions of an Advanced Reading Skills course (*Maharah Qira'ah 2*). The use of this method is believed to be able to strengthen, enrich, and improve students' Arabic reading comprehension.

Methodology

The method of this research is a pre-experimental with a one-group pretest-posttest design which involves only 14 participants of fourth semester students of the Arabic Language Education program who are taking the Arabic Advanced Reading Comprehension Proficiency course. The fourth semester of Arabic program has only one class with 14 students. In pre-experimental research, the steps incorporated collecting, interpreting, displaying results, and checking data (Creswell, 2017).

The use of pre-experimental with one pretest and posttest design in testing the effectiveness of something has been tested previously, such as its use in testing the effectiveness of classroom assessment techniques with quiz instruments made by teachers, assessment of CAT samples as treatment, and perception survey questionnaires (PSQ) about CAT (Tabuena, 2021); to measure students' ability in writing English essays that focus on content and organization with the use of process-genre approach (PGA) (Alabere & Shapii, 2019); the development of productive English skills, namely, speaking and writing, carried out at a university in Japan (Sato & Hemmi, 2022); the effectiveness of structured teaching programs at the level of knowledge among nursing staff in mental hospitals (Anand & Dhanalakshmi, 2017); as well as in testing the effectiveness of assertive training on Self-Esteem in young women (Pandey et al., 2016).

In this study the researchers wanted to know the strengths of Directed Reading Activity (DRA) strategy to improve students reading learning. A group of students were treated using the Directed Reading Activity (DRA) model beginning with a pre-test continuous treatment and then a post-test (Creswell, 2015; 2017). The dependent variable is the Directing Reading Activity Method, and the independent variable is the student's reading comprehension. It can be described as below.

(Directing Reading Activity (X))
→ | Student' Reading Comprehension (X))

Before using research instrument, it had been tested for its validity and reliability. The result indicated it was valid and reliable. The questions of the instrument were objective or multiple choice with 4 answer choices. There were totally 25 questions with 5 (five) indicators,

or levels of reading comprehension, namely, literacy comprehension, with the five leading indicators being able to find (1) the main idea, (2) explicit information, (3) implicit information, (4) word references, and (5) certain words based on their context.

The steps of the research: (1) The time needed at the first meeting was 1x100 minutes for the researcher to observe students' Arabic reading comprehension generally, and then continuing by doing pre-test. Furthermore, doing the discussion about Arabic Reading comprehension; (2) Based on the results of the pre-test, the researchers treated them with DRA strategies to strengthen reading comprehension and continued to do some exercises on the reading text. This was done two times of meeting with a duration of 6x100 minutes; and (3) After getting the treatment, students were given post-test.

In collecting the data, the researcher distributed reading texts and reading comprehension questions adapted from the book *al-Arabiyyah li An-Nasyiin* volumes one to six, which had been used as teaching materials using the DRA strategy.

From these data, the scores would be obtained to determine the students' Arabic reading ability. The hypothesis used in this research was H0: there is no difference in Arabic language skills in the pre-test-post-test. H1: there is a significant difference in students' Arabic skills in the pre-test-post-test.

Result and Discussion

Result

Before applying DRA strategy, students were tested with an initial test. It was done to determine the level of students' ability in Arabic. The initial ability test had been carried out as a whole. However, the student's abilities had not shown their potential, namely, the ideal score. The results of these tests will be described in the following **Table 1**:

Based on **Table 1**, it can be understood that the acquisition of student's Arabic Reading comprehension score on the initial test can be interpreted as the average score is not as expected (ideal). One student is in the medium category, seven students are in the low reading ability category, and six are in the deficient reading comprehension category. The percentage of reading comprehension scores on the initial test can be seen in **Figure 1**:

The results of reading comprehension according to the pre-test can be presented as shown in **Table 2**:

Table 1 Pre-test data of students' Arabic reading comprehension ability

Student name	Student Code	Pre-test Score	Information
Student 1	KS1	73.23	Currently
Student 2	KR1	69.93	Low
Student 3	KR2	69.93	Low
Student 4	KR3	66.66	Low
Student 5	KR4	66.60	Low
Student 6	KR5	66.60	Low
Student 7	KR6	66.60	Low
Student 8	KR7	63.27	Low
Student 9	KSR1	59.94	Very Low
Student 10	KSR2	56.61	Very Low
Student 11	KSR3	53.28	Very Low
Student 12	KSR4	53.28	Very Low
Student 13	KSRS1	49.95	Very Low
Student 14	KSRS2	46.62	Very Low

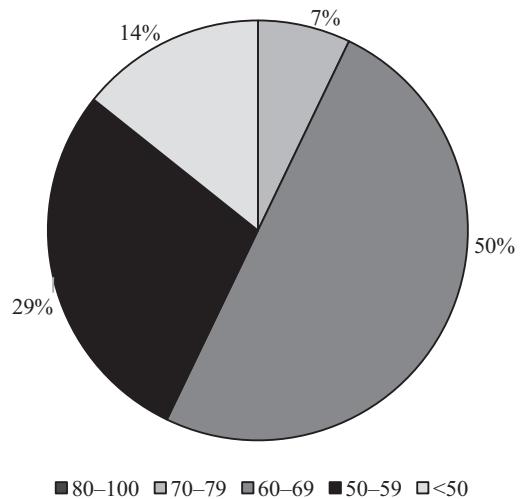


Figure 1 Percentage of reading comprehension results on the pre-test

Table 2 Reading comprehension result according to pre-test

Grade	Frequency	Percentage (%)
A	0	0%
B	1	7%
C	7	50%
D	4	29%
E	2	14%

After getting the data on students' Arabic reading comprehension, the researcher carried out learning by applying DRA strategy for six meetings. At the end of the lesson, namely, at the eighth meeting, the researcher conducted an extraordinary test of learning outcomes or post-test. The test results were analysed by calculating the students' average of learning outcomes. The data showing answers and abilities obtained by the research students are displayed in a table to make it easier to read and analyse. The presentation of data related to post-test results is shown in [Table 3](#):

Based on [Table 3](#) above, the researcher drew several interpretations. Firstly, the final reading ability of students' Arabic comprehension results (post-test) showed a significant increase at score of 80–100. The score indicates that the DRA method can maximize students' reading ability.

Table 3 Data of post-test results reading comprehension of students' Arabic

Student Name	Student Code	Post-test Score	Information
Student 1	KS1	89.91	High Ability
Student 2	KR1	100	Very High Ability
Student 3	KR2	86.58	High Ability
Student 4	KR3	93.33	Very High Ability
Student 5	KR4	100	Very High Ability
Student 6	KR5	93.33	Very High Ability
Student 7	KR6	86.58	High Ability
Student 8	KR7	93.33	Very High Ability
Student 9	KSR1	100	Very High Ability
Student 10	KSR2	86.658	High Ability
Student 11	KSR3	86.658	High Ability
Student 12	KSR4	86.658	High Ability
Student 13	KSRS1	79.992	Medium Ability
Student 14	KSRS2	79.992	Medium Ability

Secondly, the researcher found that 12 students of 14 students achieved grade A (86%). There were 6 students with very high Arabic reading comprehension category as well as 6 students with high Arabic reading comprehension category. Thirdly, 2 students got B grade (14%) with medium ability category. On the whole, it would be categorized as having a high ability to understand Arabic. The percentage of reading comprehension scores on the final test can be seen in [figure 2](#).

The results of the reading comprehension test after using the DRA method can be seen in [Table 4](#).

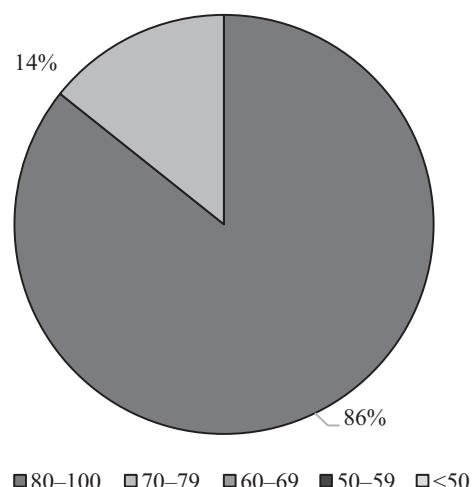


Figure 2 Percentage of reading comprehension result on the post-test

Table 4 Reading comprehension result post-test after using DRA method

Grade	Frequency	Percentage (%)
A	12	86%
B	2	14%
C	-	0%
D	-	0%
E	-	0%

[Table 4](#) above indicates clearly there is an increasing ability to understand language, namely, (100%), which shows an ideal result. The result rises from applying the DRA strategy, which is very effective in making a difference in the application of learning.

A normalcy test is required to determine how the data are distributed. When the significant value is more than 0.05, the distribution is said to be normal. The data are not regularly distributed if the amount of information is less than 0.05. Using SPSS 22 for Windows and the I-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov, the researcher performed a normality test. A non-parametric test was used to complete the investigation after that.

It then calculated the non-parametric test after performing the normality test. If the Rho Spearman data cannot be utilized to measure the non-parametric correlation test, the non-parametric test is carried out. The researchers used Spearman's Rho correlation test in SPSS 22 for Windows to determine the relationship between students reading interest and reading comprehension. A theory to ascertain the correlation between two or more variables is called Spearman's Rho. Finally, it went on to interpret Sugiyono's interpretation of the value of "r". The following [Table 5](#) depicts such.

Table 5 “r value” interpretation

The Score of “r”	Interpretation
0.00–0.199	Very Low
0.20–0.399	Low
0.40–0.599	Medium
0.60–0.799	High
0.80–1.000	Very High

The data were analyzed using the paired sample *t*-test, which was firstly tested for normality. The following are the results of the normality test as shown in **Table 6**.

Table 6 shows the significant value of the pre-test and post-test is higher than 0.05, which means that the data are usually distributed. After checking for normality, the researchers used paired samples for analysis. Paired sample statistics can be presented as shown in **Table 7**.

The results above, as shown in **Table 7**, indicate that the average pre-test score before learning is 61.71, and the post-test average is 90.29. These data indicate the average of the pre-test is smaller than the post-test ($61.71 < 90.29$). This displays a difference between the pre-test and post-intermediate test's results. Paired samples correlations can be presented as shown in **Table 8**:

As can be seen in **Table 8** above, there is a strong and positive relationship between the pre-test and post-test. This is indicated by a significance value of 0.019, which is smaller than 0.05, and a correlation coefficient value of 0.617. Paired samples test can be presented as shown in **Table 9**:

Based on the **Table 9** above, it is known that the *p* value (2-tailed) is $.000 < 0.05$, which means that there is a difference in the average of pre-test and post-test learning outcomes. So it can be concluded that there is an effect of using the DRA learning model to display information

about the Mean Paired Differences value of -28.571. This value shows the difference between the average of pre-test score and the post-test, the average value of $61.71 - 90.29 = -28.571$. The difference is between -32.466 to -24.77.

Then, based on comparing the *t*-test value with the *t*-table, it is obtained that the *t*-test is 15.850, and the *t*-table is 2.179. Thus, the *t*-test value is $15.850 > t$ -table is 2.179. So, it can be concluded that there is an average difference between the results of the pre-test and post-test or an effect of using the DRA strategy on learning.

As to the research objectives, this data presentation discusses the effectiveness and strength of learning to read and understand Arabic based on the Directed Reading Activity strategy in improving Arabic reading skill and ability. The two objectives will be discussed simultaneously through a table of four areas of DRA. The findings of the pre-test and post-test are contrasted in the data presentation that follows.

Table 6 Tests of normality

Type of test	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	p	Statistic	df	p
Pre-Test	.236	14	.033	.915	14	.186
Post-Test	.190	14	.183	.900	14	.114

Table 7 Paired samples statistics

Pair 1	Pre-Test	<i>M</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SEM</i>
		61.71	14	8.361	2.235
	Post-Test	90.29	14	6.627	1.771

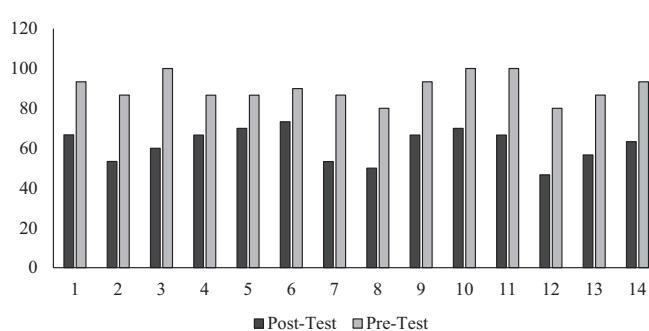
Table 8 Paired samples correlations

Pair 1	Pre-Test & Post-Test	<i>N</i>	Correlation	<i>p</i>
		14	0.617	.019

Table 9 Paired samples test

Pair 1	Pre-Test & Post-Test	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SEM</i>	Paired Differences		<i>t</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>p</i>			
					95% Confidence Interval of the Different							
					Lower	Upper						
		28.571	6.747	1.803	32.466	24.677	15.850	3	.000			

Note: **p* < .05, two-tailed.

**Figure 3** The comparison of the average score between pre-test and post-test

Discussion

It was realized that the information obtained when conducting interviews with the students conveyed the obstacles they experienced, namely, they had difficulty analyzing the questions, were confused about operating or connecting the words and grammar of the questions presented after learning to read.

Some were even almost desperate and passively participate in learning. After participating in the learning process using the DRA strategy, their motivation and enthusiasm for learning increased, and this was evidenced by an increase in their reading ability learning outcomes. Another interesting confession was that some of them admitted they had made a mistake and regretted choosing the Arabic program.

Based on the learning strategies that have been implemented, the development of learning to read Arabic comprehension can lead students to familiarize themselves with analyzing, understanding, and finding experiences when they are faced with reading Arabic texts. This finding provides a new variation for students learning Arabic. The use of learning methods positively impacts students' ability to understand Arabic, which continuously affects the improvement of learning outcomes. Furthermore, achieving high learning outcomes is the habituation of reading comprehension activities carried out consistently and constantly, that is, whatever the form of the reading text.

This was also mentioned by (Al-Fauzi, 2016; Hasan, 2018; Munandar & Srimurni, 2021), who claimed that the Directed Reading Activity (DRA) strategy teaches students how to be more active and productive in analyzing, understanding, and verbally expressing Arabic texts. And also, it will connect to various knowledge after they read.

Through systematic and comprehensive steps, the Directed Reading Activity (DRA) strategy also makes classes more directed and conducive during the teaching learning process (Setiyawan & Amumpuni, 2019). Students already know what they are going to do. (Al-Fauzi, 2016; Laksono, 2017; Saputra, 2015). This is also the same as the opinion (Rohmawati & Mulyasari, 2019; Mahbubah et al., 2018), who stated that DRA strategy had given motivation to students to take advantage of learning Arabic by forming study groups and assignments as student enrichment while studying.

Understanding Arabic text by students of Arabic program is prioritized and essential to teach (Ryding & Allen, 2013; Saputra, 2015; Syahid, 2015). This ability is

not only a form of forming a student's knowledge but also their ability analysing and understanding what they read. It will become knowledge that will be conveyed when they become a teacher (Omar & Saufi, 2015; Ruddell & Unrau, 2004). The Directed Reading Activity strategy is a powerful way to deal with students' problems in improving Arabic reading comprehension. Furthermore, the DRA strategy also gives students self confidence that they will find it very useful to learn Arabic and be able to understand it. It is not only for changing the way of students' learning but also giving a different feeling and motivation, and also, confidence when studying.

Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion it can be concluded that it is possible to encourage students to improve their understanding and skills in Arabic language by applying Direct Reading Activity (DRA) strategy in learning Arabic. The results also show that students' success is determined by taking the proper steps in learning, starting from analyzing, understanding, and finding meaning when they read. Furthermore, the DRA learning strategy showed that students were more motivated to improve their reading skills. Therefor instruction implemented through Directed Reading Activity (DRA) strategies has also been successful in improving student achievement. For this reason, Arabic language curriculum developers can make DRA an important strategic choice for Arabic language teachers to study theoretically and practically. This research has limitations in that the research sample is not very large, so the results of this research cannot be generalized to the entire research population. This research only focused on 14 fourth semester students of the Arabic Language Education program who took the Advanced Arabic Reading Skills course.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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