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Improving Reading Comprehension by Using Fable Text of the Nineth Grade Students of SMP Negeri 1 Palu

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Article Info

This research aims to determine the effectiveness of using fable texts in improving the reading comprehension skills of ninth-grade students of SMP Negeri 1 Palu. Reading comprehension is an essential skill in English learning; however, many junior high school students still struggle to understand texts due to limited vocabulary and low reading interest. Therefore, engaging narrative texts, such as fables, are considered a potential alternative to address this issue. This type of research is quasi-experimental, with a pre-test and post-test controlgroup design. The population in this study comprised all ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Palu in the 2024/2025 academic year, totaling 352 students and divided into 11 classes. The sampling technique used was cluster random sampling, so two classes were selected as the research sample, with one class serving as the experimental group and the other as the control group. The experimental group was taught using fable texts, while the control group was taught using conventional learning methods. Research data were obtained through reading comprehension tests administered before the treatment (pre-test) and after the treatment (post-test). The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistical tests to determine the significance of the treatment effect. The results showed a significant increase in students' reading comprehension skills when taught using fable texts compared to those taught using conventional methods. The average post-test score of the experimental group reached 93.55, while the control group obtained 88.39, with a significance value of 0.007 (sig. < 0.05). These findings indicate that the difference between the two groups was statistically significant. This shows that the use of fable texts has a positive, significant effect on students' reading comprehension. Keywords:

Conventional Method Fable Text Ninth-Grade Students Quasi-Experimental Design Reading Comprehension

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1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is generally defined as an active process of interpreting and responding to written language as a form of communication. In other words, reading is not merely the act

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of recognizing printed words, but also constructing meaning from the author's message. Reading not only involves decoding written symbols but also plays an active role in transmitting and understanding ideas encoded by the writer, thereby forming written communication between the writer and the reader. This process involves recognizing, decoding, and integrating information from written symbols to construct meaning from the text [1]. Therefore, reading plays an essential role in developing communication skills, expanding vocabulary, and strengthening overall language proficiency. Effective reading requires integrating prior knowledge, linguistic understanding, and contextual cues to achieve deep comprehension [2]. Thus, reading is regarded as a core language skill that supports learners' academic development and overall communicative competence. Reading comprehension refers to the ability to understand, interpret, and evaluate the ideas presented in a text. This includes identifying main ideas, analyzing supporting information, and drawing conclusions accurately. In English language learning at the junior high school level, reading comprehension is a fundamental skill that strongly influences academic success. However, many students still struggle to comprehend texts effectively. Preliminary observations at SMPN 1 Palu revealed that students often struggle to identify key ideas, analyze information, and understand essential vocabulary in English texts. Factors contributing to these challenges include limited mastery of vocabulary, low interest in reading English materials, and insufficient background knowledge of the content [3]. These

difficulties indicate that conventional reading instruction has not fully addressed students' learning needs and comprehension problems. One strategy that may help address these challenges is the use of fable texts. Ernawati [4] notes that employing different types of stories can support the development of comprehension skills because narrative texts capture students' interest and promote active engagement. Fables, in particular, offer simple storylines, familiar characters, and clear moral lessons that make them easier for students to understand. Pebriyani et al. [5] further emphasize that reading fables can enhance vocabulary knowledge and support improvements in reading comprehension, as stories are memorable and accessible. A previous study conducted by Saputra et al. [6] titled "Using Fables to Assist Students in Enhancing Their Reading Comprehension" showed that fable texts help students analyze and understand information in reading materials. These findings suggest that fables are not only engaging but also pedagogically effective for developing reading comprehension skills. Although similar studies have been conducted, the present research differs in its focus on ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Palu and its emphasis on examining the effectiveness of fable texts compared with conventional learning materials. This distinction highlights the novelty and significance of the current study. Based on these considerations, the researcher is interested in further investigating whether the use of fable texts can effectively enhance students' reading comprehension skills. This study is conducted to address the gap between students' reading difficulties and the need for more engaging instructional materials in English classrooms. This study aims to contribute empirical evidence that fables, as engaging and meaningful narrative materials, can serve as an alternative medium to support reading comprehension in English language

359 learning. The results of this research are expected to provide practical implications for English teachers in selecting appropriate reading materials for junior high school students. 2. METHOD This study follows a clear research chronology that includes the research design and procedures implemented

throughout the investigation. The research employed a quantitative, quasi-experimental design, specifically a pre-test–post-test control-group design. According to Hastjarjo [7], comparisons between groups remain essential in experimental research, a view supported by Saputri and Mardiati [8], who state that the use of pre-tests and post-tests in non-equivalent groups allows researchers to evaluate the effects of a treatment even when the school predetermines classes. In this design, an intervention is administered to one group and compared with a non-randomized control group, as explained by Sugiyono [9], who notes that quasi-experimental research includes a control group but does not allow full randomization. This design was selected to examine the causal relationship between the use of fable texts and students' reading comprehension within an authentic classroom setting. EG T 1 X T 2 CG T 1 T 2 Where: EG : Experimental Group CG : Control Group T1 : Pre-test for Experimental and Control groups T2 : Post-test for the Experimental and Control groups X : Review the treatment using Fables The population of this research consists of all ninth-grade students of SMPN 1 Palu in the 2024–2025 academic year, totaling 352 students across eleven classes. From this population, the sample was selected using a cluster sampling technique. The researcher prepared two pieces of paper labeled A and B, rolled them, and asked student representatives to choose one. The class that selected the paper with letter A became the control group, while the class that chose letter B became the experimental group. This sampling technique was chosen because the school had already formed the classes and could not be reorganized randomly. It is crucial to pick a sample that appropriately represents the research population. According to Sugiyono [10], a sample is a subset of a population selected for research purposes. The study involves two variables: the independent variable, the use of fable texts, and the dependent variable, students' reading comprehension. The independent variable was implemented as a specific instructional treatment during the teaching–learning process, while the dependent variable was measured through students' reading comprehension performance. In this study, there are two variables: the independent and dependent variables. According to Alwiyah et al.

[11], an independent variable (free) is a variable that can explain and influence other variables, thereby causing a change in the dependent variable. To collect the data, the researcher administered a reading comprehension test consisting of a pre-test

and a post-test. The pre-test was administered before the treatment to assess students' initial ability, while the post-test measured their improvement after receiving the treatment. A test instrument was used as the primary tool to gather data from the samples. The research procedure continued with a six-meeting treatment session provided only to the experimental group. During this treatment, students learned to understand narrative texts through fables, identified difficult vocabulary from the stories, and received explanations of challenging words to support their comprehension development [12]. Meanwhile, the control group received reading instruction through conventional teaching methods without using fable texts. The analysis of the data involved comparing pre-test and post-test scores of both the experimental and control groups. The gain scores were calculated to determine the extent of improvement in each group. Before conducting the t-test, precondition tests were administered, including a normality test using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov method and a homogeneity test to ensure valid statistical comparison. These tests were conducted to determine whether parametric or nonparametric statistical techniques were appropriate for data analysis. The main hypothesis test used was the paired-samples t-test at a significance level of 0.05 to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test results. Descriptive statistics were also used to describe the characteristics of the obtained data without generalizing the findings. The data were analysed using SPSS to calculate descriptive statistics and determine whether improvements in the experimental group were statistically significant, and Marliana [13] showed that SPSS helps reveal clear patterns of progress in classroom-based learning activities, making it easier to detect changes before and after treatment. In this research, SPSS was instrumental in identifying the extent of students' progress in reading

comprehension after instruction using fable texts. The use of statistical software also ensured the accuracy and reliability of the data analysis process. Overall, these steps outline the chronological flow of the research design and procedures applied in the study.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION The data were collected using a test consisting of a pre-test and a post-test. The pretest was administered before the treatment to measure students' initial reading comprehension, while the post-test was conducted after the treatment to assess improvement in their reading comprehension. Two groups were involved in this research: the experimental group, which was taught by using fable texts, and the control group, which was taught by using the conventional method. The test results were analyzed statistically using descriptive and inferential methods, including normality and homogeneity tests, and the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank and Mann-Whitney U tests.

3.1. Results Before the treatment was implemented, both groups were administered a pre-test to determine their initial level of reading comprehension, and the descriptive analysis of these results is presented in the corresponding table. Following the treatment, a post-test was administered to both groups to evaluate their reading comprehension achievement, and the

361 outcomes of this assessment are likewise displayed in the designated table. The results of the descriptive analysis are presented in the following table: Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test Control	32	57.10	97.10	78.9281	9.88532
Posttest Control	32	48.60	100.00	88.3938	10.51021
Pre-test Experiment	31	60.00	97.10	82.8581	10.05391
Posttest Experiment	31	65.71	100.00	93.5471	7.80609
Valid N (listwise)	31				

The descriptive results show that the control group had a mean score of 78.93, while the experimental group had a mean score of 82.86, with standard deviations of 9.8853 and 10.0539, respectively. These findings indicate that both groups demonstrated relatively similar levels of reading comprehension prior to the treatment, suggesting that the participants were comparable in their initial abilities. As shown in the same table, both

groups experienced an increase in their mean scores after the treatment; the control group's mean rose from 78.93 to 88.39, whereas the experimental group's mean increased from 82.86 to 93.55. Although improvements were observed in both groups, the experimental group achieved a higher mean score, suggesting that the use of fable texts was more effective at enhancing students' reading comprehension. Furthermore, the smaller standard deviation in the experimental group (7.8061) indicates that students' performance became more consistent following the treatment. To ensure the analysis was accurate, the data were first tested for normality using the Shapiro–Wilk test, which was appropriate given the sample size of fewer than 50 participants. After confirming the data distribution, the study proceeded to hypothesis testing to determine whether the use of fable texts significantly improved students' reading comprehension. The testing procedure included normality and homogeneity tests, and main hypothesis tests using the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test and the Mann–Whitney U Test. These stages ensured the validity and reliability of the analysis, strengthening the interpretation of differences between the experimental and control groups [14]. The complete results are presented in Table 2. Table 2. Test of Normality Tests of Normality Group Kolmogorov-Smirnova Shapiro-Wilk Statistic df Sig. Statistic df Sig. Pre-test Control .145 32 .083 .952 32 .168 Experiment .101 31 .200* .949 31 .150 Posttest Control .227 32 .000 .835 32 .000 Experiment .322 31 .000 .689 31 .000 *. This is a lower bound of the true significance. a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The significance values for the Pre-test Control and Pre-test Experimental groups are greater than 0.05, indicating that both pre-test groups are normally distributed. In contrast, the Post-test Control and Post-test Experimental groups show significance values below 0.05, which means their data are not normally distributed. As a result, nonparametric statistical tests were selected for subsequent hypothesis testing. Test results are shown in tables: Table 3. Test of Homogeneity Test of Homogeneity of Variance Levene Statistic df1 df2 Sig. Pre-test

Based on Mean .136 1 61 .713 Based on Median .232 1 61 .632 Based on Median and with adjusted df .232 1 60.116 .632 Based on trimmed mean .174 1 61 .678 Posttest Based on Mean 1.116 1 61 .295 Based on Median 2.147 1 61 .148 Based on Median and with adjusted df 2.147 1 60.842 .148 Based on trimmed mean 1.392 1 61 .243 The significance values obtained for the pre-test (0.713) and post-test (0.295) are both greater than 0.05, indicating that the data satisfy the assumption of homogeneity and that the variances of the control and experimental groups were statistically equal, suggesting comparable initial reading comprehension levels prior to the treatment. Following this, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, a nonparametric statistical method for paired samples, was employed to determine whether a significant difference existed between the pre-test and post-test scores within each group, as this test is suitable when the data do not meet the assumption of normality and is effective for assessing changes in students' performance before and after the intervention [15]. Table 4. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Descriptive Statistics N Mean Std. Deviation Minimum Maximum Percentiles 25th 50th (Median) 75th Pretest Kontrol 32 78.9281 9.88532 57.10 97.10 70.0250 80.0000 82.9000 Pretest Eksperimen 31 82.8581 10.05391 60.00 97.10 77.1000 82.9000 91.4000 Posttest Kontrol 32 88.3938 10.51021 48.60 100.00 83.6000 90.0000 94.3000 Posttest Eksperimen 31 93.5471 7.80609 65.71 100.00 91.4300 97.1400 97.1400

Table 5. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Statisticsa Test Statisticsa Posttest Control - Pre-test Control Posttest Experiment - Pre-test Experiment Z -3.301b -4.784b Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) .001 .000 a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test b. Based on negative ranks.   The significance value for the control group is 0.001 (sig. < 0.05), and the significance value for the experimental group is 0.000 (sig. < 0.05). These findings show that both groups experienced significant differences between their pre-test and post-test scores, indicating meaningful improvement after the learning process in each group. To further examine whether the improvement differed between the two groups, the MannWhitney U test was used to compare their post-test scores, as

this method is commonly applied in educational research when the data are not normally distributed [16]. Table 6. Mann–Whitney U Test Group Mean Std. Deviation Mean Difference Sig. Reading Comprehension Control 88.3938 10.5102 5.1533 0.007 Experimental 93.5471 7.8061 Table 7. Mann–Whitney U Test Statisticsa Test Statisticsa Posttest Mann-Whitney U 303.000 Wilcoxon W 831.000 Z -2.701 Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) .007 a. Grouping Variable: Kelompok A significance value of 0.007 (sig. < 0.05) was obtained, indicating a significant difference between the average reading comprehension scores of the control group and the experimental group. The mean difference of 5.1533 points indicates that the treatment had a substantial effect on students' reading comprehension. 3.2. Discussion Based on the research results, it was found that the application of fable texts in reading learning activities provided a significant increase in students' reading comprehension abilities. This is evident in the average reading comprehension score in the experimental group, which reached 93.55, while the control group achieved only 88.39. The results of the Mann–Whitney test showed a significance level (sig. < 0.05), indicating a meaningful difference between the two groups. The use of fable texts was proven to be more effective

than conventional learning methods in improving the reading comprehension of grade IX students at SMP Negeri 1 Palu. One key factor contributing to this success lies in the narrative nature and moral values of fable texts, which attract students' attention and encourage engagement. According to Aisyah and Maharida [17], the application of fable stories through the Student Teams Achievement Division (STAD) technique significantly improves reading comprehension, particularly in narrative texts. The interactive and story-based learning model motivates students to participate more actively, whether through shared reading, group discussion, or moral reflection. This interactive engagement not only enhances students' emotional and cognitive involvement but also deepens their understanding of text structure and meaning. This explanation aligns with the writer's current research, which also found

that fable texts effectively improved students' reading comprehension. The similarity lies in the use of narrative elements and moral content as motivational tools that engage students emotionally and cognitively. Therefore, both studies reinforce the conclusion that fable-based learning strategies can serve as a powerful medium for developing students' comprehension skills and for active participation in reading activities. Moreover, incorporating visual-based media or digital applications that present fable stories in context has been shown to effectively boost students' motivation and engagement during reading activities [18]. This method not only makes the learning experience more enjoyable but also aids comprehension by providing visual support that enhances imagination and clarifies the story's meaning. According to Hutagaol et al. [19], implementing fable texts in reading instruction significantly improves 11th-grade students' narrative reading skills. These findings are consistent with the principles of constructivism, which assert that learning becomes more meaningful when students actively build new knowledge by connecting it to their prior experiences. Therefore, using fable-based interactive media not only strengthens reading comprehension but also nurtures students' critical and reflective thinking about the texts they read. The writer's current research supports this notion, showing that integrating fable stories through audiovisual media increases engagement and comprehension among junior high school students. In line with Saputro et al. [20], the study indicates that visual and contextual reinforcement enables learners to relate their previous knowledge to new textual information, thereby enriching understanding and maintaining learning motivation. Furthermore, the language features found in fable texts are typically straightforward, have a well-organized narrative flow, and contain strong moral elements, all of which make them easier for students to comprehend. The use of simple sentence structures and clear word choices helps minimize students' cognitive effort during reading, allowing them to focus on understanding the story's meaning rather than struggling with complex language [21]. Research M. Mislaini [22] also supports this, showing that the use of fable-based media effectively enhances reading comprehension among junior high school students. Consequently,

learning through fable texts plays a vital role in improving both literal comprehension, such as identifying main ideas and key details, and inferential comprehension, such as interpreting moral values and implicit meanings in the story. The writer's current research also found similar results, demonstrating that fable texts with

365 simple yet moral-rich language significantly improved the reading comprehension of ninthgrade students at SMP Negeri 1 Palu. Both studies highlight that linguistic simplicity and moral clarity in fable narratives enable students to process information more effectively and grasp deeper meanings within the text. Therefore, this study strengthens prior evidence that well-structured fable texts can enhance students' understanding at both literal and inferential levels [23]. A comparison between the experimental and control groups taught using conventional methods revealed that although both groups improved in reading ability, the progress in the control group was notably smaller. This suggests that traditional teaching approaches are less effective in enhancing students' motivation and engagement when interpreting texts. Similar results were reported by Ismayani et al. [24], who found that reading instruction lacking in interesting, contextual, and experience-related materials often leads to lower motivation and shallow comprehension. Therefore, incorporating contextual fable-based materials is a more effective approach to improving both the learning process and outcomes in junior high school reading classes. The present study also supports this view, showing that students exposed to fable-based instruction achieved higher post-test scores than those taught through conventional methods. Both findings underscore the importance of engaging, contextually relevant materials, such as fables, in stimulating motivation and promoting deeper comprehension [25]. Hence, this study reinforces prior evidence that meaningful, relatable reading materials can substantially enhance students' cognitive engagement and overall performance in reading comprehension. 4. CONCLUSION This research aimed to determine the effectiveness of using fable texts in improving the reading comprehension skills of ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1

Palu. The findings indicate that learning through fable texts significantly enhances students' reading comprehension skills. Based on the results of the Mann–Whitney test (sig. < 0.05), a significant difference was found between the experimental group and the control group. The experimental group achieved a higher mean score of 93.55, while the control group obtained a mean score of 88.39. These results demonstrate that the use of fable texts is more effective than conventional learning methods in improving students' reading comprehension at the junior high school level. Therefore, it can be concluded that the use of fable texts improves the reading comprehension of ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Palu. The improvement in students' reading skills can be attributed to the engaging storylines and moral messages found in fables, which make the learning process more enjoyable and meaningful. In addition, the use of visual and digital media increased students' interest and motivation in reading. The simple language and clear narrative structure of fable texts also helped students understand the reading content more easily without struggling with complex vocabulary. Overall, the use of fable texts in reading instruction has proven effective in enhancing students' comprehension, participation, and motivation, while making reading activities more interactive and better suited to junior high school students.

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