

Research Article

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Optimizing the Reader Response Approach: A Strategic Framework for Improving Reading Comprehension in EFL Classroom

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Abstract

Background/purpose. This study aims to examine the implementation of structured reading strategies through the Reader Response Approach (RRA) in an online EFL reading class to enhance students' reading comprehension and critical engagement with literary texts. Responding to a text allows readers to deepen their understanding, articulate personal interpretations, and connect literary works to real-life experiences.

Materials/methods. This qualitative case study was conducted in a Critical Reading course involving 24 students from the English Literature program at the Indonesia University of Education (UPI) who was taught by a lecturer from Semarang State University (UNNES). The study focused on how students internalized and responded to The Famous Five literary texts using structured reading phases—previewing, questioning, annotating, outlining, summarizing, reviewing, and reflecting—which were previously unavailable in the class. Data were collected through multiple methods, including interviews adapted from Rosenblatt's (1993) Reader Response Theory, Mikulecky et al.'s (2007) strategies in More Reading Power, and Harmer's (2007) reading principles in How to Teach English.

Results. The results indicated that students engaged critically with the novels by effectively utilizing the instructional steps of Reader Response Approach (RRA). The use of these structured reading process has been found to improve students' comprehension, allowing them to establish effective reading methods and foster independent learning.

Conclusion. This study highlights the significance of structured reading strategies in promoting critical thinking and comprehension. The findings also provide actionable strategies for educators, making the research not only theoretical but also applicable in a real classroom setting.



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1. Introduction

Reading literacy is a critical skill, as emphasized by The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which assesses global educational systems by evaluating the reading proficiency of 15-year-old students (Khamkhong, 2018; Gordon, 2023). PISA highlights the necessity of critical thinking in interpreting, integrating, and evaluating textual information. Reading is a complex, multidimensional process in academic settings, particularly among ESL/EFL learners. Learners must navigate decoding, vocabulary, and comprehension simultaneously. Prior research has identified several barriers to effective reading: limited background knowledge, weak decoding skills, and insufficient metacognitive strategy use (Harvey, 2016; Rani, 2016). Scholars such as Rosenblatt (2018) and Kim (2023) emphasize the importance of transactional reading, in which the reader interacts with the text based on personal experiences and emotions, forming meaning dynamically.

This study examines the Reader Response Approach (RRA) in instructional activities, as introduced by Clark and Rosenblatt (1970) and further explored by Harmer (2007). RRA is based on the principle that a literary work gains meaning through the interaction between the reader and the text, with this meaning shaped by the reader's engagement within a specific context (Clark & Rosenblatt, 1970; Kunjanman & Aziz, 2021; Bist & Kandel, 2024b). Marhaeni (2016) describes reading as a transactional process in which meaning is constructed through the dynamic interaction between the reader and the text. RRA provides a theoretical and instructional framework to support this interactive process that encourages learners to respond to literary texts actively. This model promotes personal interpretation, emotional engagement, and critical reflection, often through journals, discussions, and creative transformation activities (Iskhak et al., 2017; Mart, 2019b). While RRA has proven effective in L1 contexts, its application in EFL settings remains underexplored, and existing studies often focus narrowly on textual analysis rather than broader sociocultural integration. In addition, Spirovska (2019) and Mart (2019b) assert that the essence of RRA lies in constructing meaning through the interaction between the reader and the text, which enhances both emotional and intellectual engagement. The reader-response approach improves students' understanding by stressing the reader as an active participant who gives a literary work its "real existence" and completes its meaning through interpretation. To summarise all of the definitions, the RRA encourages active and meaningful reading, facilitating a deeper comprehension of literary texts.

Although some EFL research has adopted RRA (e.g., Khatib & Farahian, 2013; Bagherkazemi & Alemi, 2010), many have not addressed how to structure reading strategies across different phases—before, during, and after reading—as a systematic instructional design. Additionally, previous studies often lack practical classroom applications that guide EFL learners in building independent critical reading habits through structured responses. There is a need for an empirical investigation that not only adopts the reader-response framework but also integrates step-by-step strategies such as previewing, annotating, summarizing, and reflecting—especially in online or hybrid learning contexts where autonomy is essential. This study contributes to the field of EFL reading instruction by providing a practical and structured application of the RRA in a non-native, online learning context, an area that remains underrepresented in current literature.

Given the significance of reading comprehension in academic and personal development, students' ability to engage with texts is indicative of their overall understanding. Strong comprehension skills enable students to articulate their opinions and responses effectively. By integrating various reading strategies into an EFL reading class, this study aims to fill the gap by implementing a structured model of the Reader Response Approach in a Critical Reading course for EFL learners. It contributes to the literature by (1) applying a full sequence of reading strategies tailored for RRA and (2) providing empirical classroom-based data in an Indonesian university setting.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Reader Response Approach

According to Clark and Rosenblatt (1970), Reader Response Theory emphasised readers' active role in interpreting literary texts. This framework highlights how personal reactions and experiences shape the understanding of literature, particularly for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Research by Bist and Kandel (2024b) indicates that this approach enhances literary comprehension among EFL learners, while Iskhak et al. (2017b) highlight the positive impact of writing reader response journals, noting that their use significantly improves the consistency and quality of students' literary responses. Kunjanman and Azlina (2021) highlight that the Reader Response Approach (RRA) fosters a deeper appreciation for literature beyond mere language acquisition, encouraging EFL learners to engage with texts for enjoyment.

To support this approach, instructional activities are implemented to cultivate critical thinking within the curriculum. Drawing on teacher interviews and classroom observations, Zou and Chen (2023) demonstrate that critical thinking (CT) instruction is primarily integrated into language learning and assessment by promoting skepticism, encouraging reflection and hope, and validating students' voices in online learning environments. Similarly, Pu and Xu (2023) advocate for a realist curriculum that aims to develop CT skills and liberate students from egocentric reasoning. Their study conceptualizes the curriculum as a form of critical praxis—a structured space where students' critical thinking evolves alongside their personal growth.

The structured integration of reading activities in the classroom of this research then follows the framework outlined by Suwanarak (2019), which describes reading as a dynamic, interactive process between the author and the reader, unfolding in three stages: before, during, and after reading. In the pre-reading stage, students set reading objectives and preview texts to identify key themes and ideas. During reading, strategies such as annotating and outlining enhance comprehension by encouraging active engagement with the text. In the post-reading stage, summarizing, reviewing, and reflecting help consolidate knowledge, transferring it from short-term to long-term memory. Reflection, in particular, deepens students' engagement with the text, allowing them to articulate their interpretations while reinforcing critical thinking and analytical skills.

2.2. Reading Strategies

As previously mentioned, reading strategies play a crucial role in enhancing students' comprehension of texts. A similar study examined the use of reading strategies in online texts by EFL teachers. Mudra (2018), using the Online Survey of Reading Strategies (OSORS), identified key strategies that aid in comprehending and improving understanding of online texts. Meanwhile, Intasena (2024) highlighted the effectiveness of the HyFlex learning approach, which integrates face-to-face and online learning environments, in improving students' reading comprehension. These findings contribute to a broader understanding of instructional methods that enhance reading skills and support the adoption of evidence-based reading instruction.

Similarly, Quinonez-Beltran et al. (2023) found that incorporating active reading strategies—such as predicting, using graphic organizers, summarizing, brainstorming, and scanning—through Zoom meetings significantly improved students' reading skills in virtual learning settings. Students reported that these strategies were engaging and contributed positively to their reading comprehension during remote learning. The implementation of active reading strategies, along with the use of inspirational texts, further motivated students to continue developing their reading habits beyond the classroom. This work is similar to Kolcubasi and Tasyi (2024), who examined the effect of teaching reading and listening skills with activities supported by Web 2.0 applications. Accordingly, teaching

comprehension activities supported by Web 2.0 applications effectively improved students' achievement at greater reading and listening comprehension levels.

Proficiency in English reading is essential for overall language competency, as learning in academic settings often depends on written materials. Researchers have recently emphasized the importance of metacognitive reading strategies in improving English reading comprehension. Kan et al. (2024), following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines, analyzed studies on metacognitive reading strategies and their impact. The review highlighted the widespread use of the Metacognitive Awareness of Reading Strategies Inventory and its revised editions, with a particular focus on problem-solving strategies. The findings reaffirm the significant role of metacognitive strategies in enhancing English reading comprehension and offer practical recommendations for EFL and ESL educators.

Given the effectiveness of various reading strategies, this study adopts a structured approach to reading instruction by implementing three key phases: before, during, and after reading. These steps provide clarity and structure, helping students engage with texts more effectively and develop a deeper understanding of reading materials.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The focus of this research was the Critical Reading course, which was part of the Independent Student Exchange Program (Program Pertukaran Mahasiswa Mandiri or PMM). This initiative is a component of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program, promoted by Indonesia's Ministry of Education and Culture. PMM allows students to gain academic experiences at partner universities across the country, with the opportunity to transfer course credits back to their home institutions. In this study, the Critical Reading course was conducted fully online during the odd semester of the 2024/2025 academic year. It involved 24 students from the English Literature program at the Indonesia University of Education (UPI). The course was taught by a lecturer from Semarang State University (UNNES), who was experienced in literary instruction. Participants in this research were selected based on their enrolment in the course supported by the PMM program and active participation throughout the semester.

This study explored the process of internalizing and responding to literary texts, focusing on two well-known novel series of **The Famous Five**, *Treasure Island*, and *Plenty of Fun*. It examined how students constructed comprehension responses and developed critical interpretations. Additionally, the research investigated the role of literary texts as instructional materials in teaching English as a foreign language, particularly in how students engaged with and analyzed these texts. Given the necessity for teachers to implement effective online reading strategies and pedagogical practices, this study aligns with the Second Language Online Reading Strategy Inventory (SLORSI) recommendations. Laeli et al. (2022) emphasize that EFL education programs should provide explicit training for pre-service teachers in online reading strategies and model these strategies for future students. The study contributes to the field by highlighting the importance of structured reading practices in an online learning environment.

A qualitative research design was employed to assess the effectiveness of the Reader Response Approach (RRA) in enhancing students' comprehension in *Critical Reading* classes. Data collection methods included interviews, observations, and artifact analysis, each offering unique insights that collectively provided a comprehensive understanding of RRA integration in the classroom. This study adopts a multiple-case study design, which provides valuable insights into participants' experiences through various qualitative data collection methods, including participant observations, artifact analysis, and semi-structured interviews (Creswell, 2013). This method aligns with the researcher's

interest in exploring how students respond to literary texts and engage critically through structured reading. The rationale for choosing this method lies in its capacity to capture in-depth insights from multiple participants (students and lecturer) in a real instructional setting, offering rich, contextualized data that a survey or experimental method would not provide.

3.2. Data Collection

This study employed multiple data collection methods. Interviews were conducted with the lecturer and students enrolled in the Critical Reading course, focusing on their understanding and interpretation of the text. The interview process included discussions with the lecturer and third-semester students from the English Literature Study Program at the Faculty of Languages and Arts, Semarang State University. In-depth interviews with both the lecturer and students provided qualitative insights into their experiences, reflections, and perceptions of the effectiveness of Reader Response instruction. The interview questions were adapted from Rosenblatt's (1993) *Textual Context Reader Response Approach*, Mikulecky et al.'s (2007) *Reading Fiction/Reading for Pleasure in More Reading Power*, and Harmer's (2007) *Reading Principles in How to Teach English*. This structured interview format, commonly used in qualitative social research, allowed for a comparative analysis of responses across different interviews (Dawson, 2002).

Classroom observations systematically captured interactions between the lecturer, students, and the RRA during reading activities. A structured observation protocol was implemented to document key instructional strategies, student engagement levels, and the integration of RRA in real time. In addition, artifact analysis focused on designing and applying syllabus, lesson plans, and instructional materials used in the classroom.

3.3. Data Analysis

Following the case study approaches outlined by Johnson and Stake (1996) and Yin (2002), which emphasize a descriptive paradigm, this study employed multiple data analysis methods. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to interpret data from observations and interviews. This qualitative research method involved systematically identifying patterns within the data. These themes served as analytical units for an in-depth examination of the data set, enabling researchers to engage with the data and explore the meanings underlying participants' testimonies (Labra et al., 2020).

The analysis focused on the lecturer's implementation of the Reader Response Approach (RRA), examining its three phases: modelled, guided, and independent practice. Additionally, this study explored students' engagement throughout the process. This analysis focused on the lecturer's application of the three RRA phases, the students' engagement across these phases, and the underlying factors affecting their participation. The study contributes to EFL pedagogy by providing a structured yet adaptable framework for implementing reader-response strategies in online critical reading contexts. The primary objective was to gain a deeper understanding of the lecturer's perspectives and the key factors influencing student participation in Reader Response activities. The instructional activities followed a structured sequence to facilitate the learning process. In line with this research, Djamahar et al. (2018) highlighted that a well-structured learning design—including a syllabus, lesson plan, learner worksheets, and evaluation instruments—can serve as an effective instructional framework.

4. Results

4.1. Reader Response Approach Scaffolds Students' Comprehension in Pre-reading through Previewing and Questioning

During the second meeting, students were assigned novels along with response questions. One student mentioned reading *The Wizard of Oz* and *Willy Wonka*, explaining that she was required to analyze the intrinsic elements of the novel, including the synopsis, characters, and themes. Another student shared that she had read *P.S. I Love You and Love, Rosie* but felt that these novels were not directly relevant to the course content. In response, the lecturer introduced a new text that was more closely connected to a relevant social issue. A third student, who preferred mystery novels, referenced *Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor Tversky, stating his intention to analyze the plot, characters, and extrinsic elements after reading.

The lecturer then asked students why critical reading is important. One student volunteered, stating that critical reading enhances comprehension, "When we become critical readers, it helps us understand the text better and improves our decision-making regarding it. We can form opinions about the text and comprehend it more deeply." Another student added that critical reading allows readers to express their opinions, saying, "I think we can give some opinions about the text." Another followed with, "Maybe we can share the information we gained after reading."

Building on this discussion, the lecturer explained the significance of critical reading within the Reader Response Approach (RRA). She emphasized that critical reading is not merely about identifying flaws in a text but also about evaluating its structure, meaning, and impact on the reader. She highlighted the benefits of critical reading, particularly its role in fostering personal connections with the text. Citing McKay and Rosenblatt (1980), she noted that the RRA is crucial for understanding the reading process and requires a solid grasp of theoretical approaches for effective application in an English online classroom.

The lecturer outlined two key aspects of critical reading: first, understanding not only what a text communicates but also the effects the author intends to create in the reader; and second, evaluating whether the author successfully conveys their ideas or message. To illustrate this, she used *Animal Farm* by George Orwell as an example, explaining that Orwell sought to critique government power by presenting Marxist ideas about the strength of the working class. She concluded by discussing the broader benefits of critical reading, including its role in literary analysis through literary criticism, engaging with scholarly articles, developing argumentation skills, and enhancing digital awareness when encountering online information.

To further explore the purpose of critical reading, the lecturer emphasized its role in transforming readers into analytical thinkers. By developing analytical skills, students improve their ability to scan and skim texts, enabling them to expand on textual discussions and articulate their thoughts in writing. She introduced previewing as the first step in critical reading and displayed the cover of *Famous Five: Treasure Island*. She encouraged students to preview the book by examining its title and illustration before formulating arguments for discussion in the next session, using a Google Drive link for reference.

The class concluded with students sharing their responses about the previewing and questioning process. Based on the title and illustrations, they inferred that the story revolves around an adventurous journey involving a group of friends—four boys and a girl—accompanied by two dogs. They also speculated that Enid Blyton wrote the book for a young audience. The discussion led to the emergence of several questions, including: Who are the 'Famous Five'? What kind of adventures do they embark on? Where do these adventures take place? What challenges do they encounter? How does the story conclude?

4.2. Reader Response Approach Scaffolds Students' Comprehension in Pre-reading through Annotating and Outlining

During the third and fourth meetings on September 10 and 17, 2024, the lecturer assigned students to read an e-book novel *Lima Sekawan* (The Famous Five) by Enid Blyton, aiming to develop their analytical skills in fiction. She explained that the novel was chosen to facilitate critical analysis among literature students.

The reading activity began with scanning and skimming, focusing on previewing and questioning to identify the author's main point, which is often introduced at the beginning and reinforced in the conclusion or title. Recognizing the central idea helped students structure the details presented in the text and connect them to concepts from other reading assignments.

After identifying the main points, the lecturer guided students in elaborating on the text by extracting supporting details found in explanations, examples, and factual statements. She emphasized annotating as a crucial step in active reading, commonly referred to as close reading. Through annotation, students engaged deeply with the text by employing various note-taking strategies, such as marking, highlighting, underlining, and using symbols like asterisks. They were also encouraged to write brief summaries, thoughts, or questions in the margins. For those who preferred not to write directly in the book, alternatives such as sticky notes or separate sheets of paper were suggested. The purpose of annotation was to aid memory retention and facilitate recall during writing assignments or class discussions. Additionally, the lecturer advised students to take note of unfamiliar words and look up their meanings later.

To further develop their analytical skills, the lecturer introduced outlining as a method for visually organizing a text's main ideas and supporting details. She explained that outlining is commonly used in essays, term papers, book reviews, and speeches. Before concluding the class, she demonstrated how to create an outline, reinforcing the importance of these skills in critical reading and literary analysis.

Table 1. Instructional Activities on Annotating and Outlining

I	MAIN IDEA	
	A. Subsidiary idea or supporting idea to I.	
	B. Subsidiary ide or supporting idea to I	
		1. Subsidiary idea to B
		2. Subsidiary idea to B
		a. Subsidiary idea to 2.
		b. Subsidiary idea to 2.
II	MAIN IDEA	
	A. Subsidiary or supporting idea to II.	
	B. Subsidiary idea to II	
	C. Subsidiary idea to II	
III	MAIN IDEA	

Table 1, Instructional Activities on Annotating and Outlining, illustrated the fundamental structure of an outline, which consisted of a main idea followed by supporting ideas (e.g., Supporting Idea 1, Supporting Idea 2, etc.). Additionally, sub-supporting ideas could be incorporated to create a hierarchical structure. Below is an example of students' worksheets demonstrating the annotating process.

Table 2. Students Worksheets on Annotating and Outlining

Annotating		Outlining	
Have Plenty of Fun	On a Treasure Island	Have Plenty of Fun	On a Treasure Island
<p>Page 2:</p> <p>1.) 'Yes. Father's working on some great scheme with these two men,' said George. 'One of them's a genius, apparently, and has hit on an idea that's too wonderful for words.'</p> <p>Page 3:</p> <p>1.) George's father was certainly clever. All the same, George sometimes wished that he was a more ordinary parent, one who would play cricket or tennis with children, and not be so horrified at shouting and laughter and silly jokes.</p> <p>2.) The four cousins were very careful not to upset George's father. He had a very hot temper and shouted at the top of his voice when he was angry.</p>	<p>(p.16) Pooh! Fancy bothering about pretty frocks," said George, in a <u>scornful</u> voice. Scornful: feeling or expressing contempt or derision.</p> <p>(p.14) "She can be very rude and <u>haughty</u>-but she's kind at heart, Haughty: arrogantly superior and disdainful.</p> <p>(p.15) and her very blue eyes looked as bright as <u>forget-me-nots</u> in her face. Forget me not: a flower that belong to genus Myosotis. Bright blue petals and yellow centers.</p>	<p>Main Idea: Chapter 1</p> <p>Supporting Idea: George's father (Uncle Quentin) and mother (Aunt Fanny) were Anne, Julian, and Dick's uncle and aunt. So, they are George's cousins.</p> <p>Subsidiary Ideas: - George really loves to have her cousins with her. - George's father is a scientist. - He is working on a project with two of his friends. They visiting her house that day. George is a short-tempered person (easily angry).</p>	<p>Main Idea : Chapter 1</p> <p>Supporting Idea : The four children (George, Anne, Julian, and Dick) and Timmy, George's dog, were relaxing at the seashore.</p> <p>Subsidiary Ideas: - One of her father's friends (an American man) approached George and Anne. - He told them that he had a daughter who would enter that same school as theirs. - Her name is Berta. - George likes that man (her father's friend) because he thought that George was a boy.</p>

Table 2, Students' Worksheets on Annotating and Outlining, illustrated how students identified and annotated the main idea, followed by supporting ideas (e.g., Supporting Idea 1, Supporting Idea 2, etc.).

4.3. Reader Response Approach Scaffolds Students' Comprehension in Pre-reading through Summarizing, Reviewing, and Reflecting

During the fifth, sixth, and seventh meetings, held on September 24, October 1, and October 8, 2024, the lecturer reviewed students' notes by expanding, clarifying, making connections, and identifying any remaining questions. She instructed students to revisit their notes, adding necessary details, clarifying points, and highlighting key terms by circling them or underlining supporting arguments. This process helped students articulate discussions based on their annotations.

Before reading, students practiced previewing and questioning by analyzing book covers, making predictions, and formulating questions about the content. This helped them develop hypotheses about the storyline using visual cues. During reading, they took notes through annotation and outlining, using techniques such as underlining, highlighting, symbols, and structured outlines to enhance comprehension. After reading, students completed summaries, reviews, and reflections. They were required to summarize the novels in their own words and respond to related questions, integrating sentence starters from previous reading phases to structure their responses effectively. To guide the process, the lecturer posed four essential questions: Why should we summarize? What is the purpose of summarizing? Why do we summarize a text? What constitutes summarizing? Below is an example of summarizing, reviewing, and reflecting on *Have Plenty of Fun* and *Treasure Island*.

Table 3. Students Worksheets of Summarizing, Reviewing, and Reflecting on *Have Plenty of Fun*

Have Plenty of Fun		
Summarizing	Reviewing	Reflecting
The novel describes how the Five Famous met a girl named Berta. The conflict revolves around the Famous Five trying to protect Berta from the kidnappers. <i>Five Have Plenty of Fun</i> provides us a story of how the Five Famous faced the threat of Berta's kidnappers. They also had character development, such as George, who shows her fierce independence and loyalty when she was kidnapped instead of Berta, despite the fact that she initially hated Berta.	I can sense the Famous Five's panic when George starts missing. I love how I can enjoy the book while still comprehension the plot, despite the fact that it was initially published in 1955. The most interesting part of the book is when George's character grows throughout the story. She initially dislikes, perhaps even hates, Berta because of the way she acts and dresses. But when she was being kidnapped, when they supposedly kidnapped Berta, George showed her loyalty to Berta and even sacrificed herself to help Berta. Despite that, I realized that I didn't know enough about the American man. He is Berta's father, which is the reason Berta is not safe with him. I feel like it's rushed and underdeveloped. It would be good to learn more about his project and what he does while Berta is at Kirrin Cottage.	<i>Five Have Plenty of Fun</i> , and <i>Five on a Treasure Island</i> showcase how even when we face challenges such as danger, friendship and loyalty actually can give us a sense of security. I can feel how close they were, how they cared for each other and understood each other's emotions. They each have their own persona and role within the group. Julian's personality appeals to me the most since he is mature and leads the group in terms of thinking and problem-solving. It's amazing that a kid like him is capable of such an attitude. It is extremely different from my childhood. I have no friends the same age as me, and playing with a younger friend makes me feel uncomfortable, because I need to babysit them, even though I was five, one or two older than them.

Table 3 presents students' worksheets on summarizing, reviewing, and reflecting on *Five Have Plenty of Fun*. In the summarizing section, students described how the Famous Five encountered a girl named Berta. The conflict arose when they attempted to protect her from kidnappers. The story primarily takes place in Kirrin Cottage and Kirrin Island. In the reviewing section, one student shared that while reading *Five Have Plenty of Fun*, she could strongly sense the characters' panic when George went missing. She found the most compelling aspect of the story to be George's character development, particularly how the Famous Five's concern for her disappearance reflected their deep bond. Despite George's initial dislike for Berta, she ultimately demonstrated loyalty by sacrificing herself to help Berta. In the reflecting section, another student observed that *Five Have Plenty of Fun* highlights how friendship and loyalty can provide a sense of security, even in the face of challenges and danger. He noted the closeness among the characters and how they genuinely cared for and understood each other's emotions. Each character had a distinct role within the group, with Julian portrayed as a mature and responsible leader who guided them in problem-solving. The student expressed particular admiration for Julian's character traits.

Table 4. Students Worksheets of Summarizing, Reviewing, and Reflecting on a Treasure Island

On a Treasure Island		
Summarizing	Reviewing	Reflecting
<i>Five on a Treasure Island</i> is the first volume in the Famous Five series. This novel introduces us to the Five Famous Group members: Julian, Dick, Anne, George, and Timmy the dog. The plot for this book is more focused on family and the thrill of exploration. It revolves on the discovery of a treasure map at Kirrin Island. This led the Five Famous to embark on a thrilling hunt for hidden gold in the old Castle. It shows their teamwork and friendship.	It is an excellent introduction to Famous Five for readers because it interplays the children's characteristics. Despite the wonderful plot, it is quite predictable, which makes me bored when reading. I feel like every guess from me of the next plot is always right and makes me feel less excited. I enjoy reading <i>Five Have Plenty of Fun</i> than <i>Five on a Treasure Island</i> .	<i>Five Have Plenty of Fun</i> , and <i>Five on a Treasure Island</i> showcase how friendship and loyalty can give us a sense of security even when we face challenges such as danger. I can feel how close they were, how they cared for each other and understood each other's emotions. They each have their own persona and role within the group. Julian's personality appeals to me the most since he is mature and leads the group in terms of thinking and problem-solving. It's amazing that a kid like him is capable of such an attitude. It is extremely different from my childhood. I have no friends the same age as me, and playing with a younger friend makes me feel uncomfortable because I need to babysit them, even though I was five, one or two older than them.

Table 4 presents students' worksheets on summarizing, reviewing, and reflecting on *Treasure Island*. In the summarizing section, students described the Famous Five members—Julian, Dick, Anne, George, and Timmy the dog. The novel's plot revolves around themes of family and the thrill of

exploration, centering on the discovery of a treasure map on Kirrin Island. This discovery sets the Famous Five on an adventurous quest to uncover hidden gold in an old castle, highlighting their teamwork and friendship. In the reviewing section, students observed that the novel serves as a strong introduction to the Famous Five series, effectively showcasing the distinct personalities of the children. However, while the plot was engaging, some students found it somewhat predictable, which they felt could reduce excitement during reading. In the reflecting section, students expressed that the novel demonstrates how friendship and loyalty offer a sense of security, even in the face of danger. They highlighted the strong bond among the characters, emphasizing their care and understanding for one another. Each character played a unique role in the group, with Julian portrayed as a mature and responsible leader who guided them in solving problems. One student specifically mentioned his admiration for Julian's character traits.

5. Discussion

The primary objective of this research is to analyze the various reading steps implemented in instructional activities for an EFL reading class, covering previewing, questioning, annotating, outlining, summarizing, reviewing, and reflecting.

The findings indicate that students actively engaged with the novels by effectively applying the RRA instructional approach. During the pre-reading stage, particularly in previewing and questioning, all 24 students successfully described the novel covers and formulated critical questions, such as why the boys appeared frightened and why they were chasing the boat. Continue to the annotating phase, students demonstrated their ability to interact with the text, employing techniques such as highlighting, underlining, using asterisks, and writing brief summaries, thoughts, or questions. They then proceeded to create structured outlines, summarizing the novel from the first chapter to the last. Finally, at the summarizing, reviewing, and reflecting stages, students effectively demonstrated their comprehension by completing assignments that integrated all reading steps.

Regarding online instruction, this research aligns with Suwannasom's study (2023), which examined the use of maxims in EFL instruction during online learning due to the pandemic. That study explored teachers' decision-making processes and how they structured their teaching around curricular goals, lesson plans, activities, instructional materials, and techniques—incorporating maxims of planning, order, encouragement, and involvement. While sharing similarities, this study differs by specifically focusing on reading strategies and the lecturer's instructional methods during the learning process.

Teacher also should be delivering online reading strategies and pedagogical practices in teaching online reading (Laeli et al., 2022). Using the Second Language Online Reading Strategy Inventory (SLORSI), they suggest that EFL education programs must highlight the importance of providing explicit practice for pre-service teachers using online reading strategies and model the strategy for future students, for this what the study is giving.

Similarly, Luo et al. (2024) designed an instructional model to enhance reading abilities among vocational students in China. However, their research focused on a teaching model with key components related to technical knowledge and learning attitudes, incorporating six elements: principles of the model, objectives, syntax, social system, principles of reaction, and support system. Meanwhile, Chen and Abdullah (2024) highlighted reading instruction as a pivotal element in improving EFL learners' comprehension. Their study conducted a bibliometric data analysis of foreign language publications, emphasizing key terms such as EFL and reading instruction. Unlike these studies, the current research specifically examines reading activities within the learning process, spanning from previewing to reflecting.

Implementing structured reading steps has been shown to improve students' comprehension by fostering effective reading strategies, enhancing their understanding, and encouraging independent learning. This approach aligns with the findings of Li et al. (2024), who conducted a systematic review following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines to examine the factors influencing reading strategies among EFL/ESL college students. Their research highlights that proficient readers tend to utilize a broader range of effective strategies and exhibit greater metacognitive awareness in their reading practices.

This comprehensive investigation sheds light on how structured reading steps like as previewing, questioning, annotating, outlining, summarizing, reviewing and reflecting are implemented in EFL reading class. The finding shows that by guiding students through this holistic RRA teaching strategy, the lecturer was able to develop critical engagement with the reading materials, as indicated by the students' active participation and expert use of the various tactics. This study expands on previous studies by looking into the subtleties of the learning process, rather than focusing merely on improving reading skills or studying instructional approaches more widely. These structured reading processes have been found to improve students' comprehension, allowing them to establish effective reading methods and foster independent learning.

6. Conclusion

This study aimed to examine how the Reader Response Approach (RRA) can enhance EFL students' critical engagement with literary texts in a structured and meaningful way. In alignment with that aim, the findings revealed that RRA, when implemented through a well-organized instructional sequence comprising previewing, questioning, annotating, outlining, summarizing, reviewing, and reflecting, enables students to deeply interact with texts, form personal interpretations, and develop independent reading strategies. The study demonstrates that the meaning of a text is not fixed but co-constructed through the reader's lived experience, emotional responses, and contextual understanding.

Integrating RRA into the instructional activities provided a pedagogical framework that supports cognitive and affective learning. It centred on students' engagement with The Famous Five novels and encouraged analytical reflection, collaborative meaning-making, and diverse interpretations rooted in students' social and personal contexts. These structured phases allowed learners to critically approach texts while expressing their identities and values.

In sum, this study contributes to the field of EFL reading instruction by offering a replicable model for integrating reader-response strategies into the students' instructional activities. It provides evidence that a structured RRA-based reading approach can improve students' comprehension and critical literacy in online learning environments. The findings are especially relevant for educators seeking to promote active, reflective, and empathetic readers in culturally diverse classrooms.

7. Suggestion

This study highlights the significance of structured reading strategies in promoting critical thinking and comprehension. The finding also provides actionable strategies for educators, making the research not only theoretical but also applicable in real classroom setting, thus enhancing its relevance and impact. Unlike previous research, which often overlooks the full sequence of reading activities, this study demonstrates the effectiveness of implementing RRA throughout the entire reading process. Future research could further explore the integration of RRA with digital tools and technology to accommodate diverse learning needs and enhance students' overall engagement with texts.

Declarations

Author Contributions. A.B.: Literature review, conceptualization. C.D.: methodology, data analysis. E.F.: review-editing and writing, original manuscript preparation. All authors have read and approved the published on the final version of the article)

Conflicts of Interest. The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Approval. The authors declared that the study was conducted as part of a dissertation that will be defended in the final examination to fulfil the requirements for a doctoral degree in English Language Education Semarang State University, Indonesia. The authors further declared that the study was conducted in accordance with the highest ethical principles, including informed consent, data privacy, and confidentiality of the participants.

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