



THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CHUNKING STRATEGY IN IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AT EFL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the efficacy of the chunking strategy in enhancing reading comprehension among students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). A total of 62 students from two classes X TKJ 1 and X TKJ 2 at SMK Muhammadiyah Karanganyar participated in the research. Employing a quantitative approach through a quasi-experimental design, the study utilized pre-tests, post-tests, and questionnaires as instruments for data collection. The pre-test and post-test results were analyzed using SPSS 25, with the Mann-Whitney U Test yielding a significance value of 0.002. This statistical outcome suggests that the application of the chunking strategy had a significant and positive effect on students' reading comprehension performance. Accordingly, the findings affirm that the chunking strategy serves as an effective instructional method for fostering reading comprehension among EFL learners.

Keywords: Chunking Strategy, Reading Comprehension, EFL Students.

1. INTRODUCTION

The mastery of English is influenced by multiple contributing factors, among which reading holds a pivotal role as a fundamental skill that significantly determines language learning success. Reading involves an intricate cognitive process wherein proficient readers actively construct meaning by integrating the textual content with their existing background knowledge. According to National Reading Panel (2022), reading is both a conscious and subconscious mental activity that engages readers in employing a range of strategies to interpret the intended meaning conveyed by the author, drawing upon textual cues and prior experiences. Furthermore, as highlighted by

Mardhiyatuzakiyah et al. (2021), cultivating a genuine interest in reading can yield numerous benefits, particularly in enhancing one's ability to comprehend texts more effectively.

Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill in language learning, which is the basis for acquiring knowledge and understanding written text (Fadilah et al., 2023; Kaforina et al., 2023). According to Farida in (Susilawati, 2023) the purpose of reading comprehension is so that readers can understand the content of what is read. According Wahyuni (2019) to the process of creating meaning by fusing information from a reading with previously acquired knowledge is known as reading comprehension.

Vol 8, No 2 (2025): ESTEEM

Considered essential in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, reading comprehension can be said to be an effective skill that enables students to process information, analyze content, and improve their academic success (Isgiarno et al., 2020; Jaya et al., 2025; Day, 2023). Despite its importance, many EFL students face challenges in comprehending texts due to limited vocabulary, unfamiliar sentence structures, and the inability to organize information effectively (Muluk et al., 2021; Fitriyah & Jannah, 2021; Fitrawati et al., 2023).

As stated by Jin (2023) in her journal that the problems that occur in EFL students are limited vocabulary knowledge, and weakness in recognizing the grammatical functions of different parts of the sentence. Various strategies have been developed to overcome these challenges, one of the strategies in teaching reading comprehension is chunking. Chunking emerged as one of the most effective approaches. Chunking, a cognitive strategy that involves breaking down information into manageable units, is widely recognized to improve memory retention and comprehension.

Suppawittaya and Yasri (2021) states that chunking is a cognitive strategy of breaking information into

smaller, more manageable units or “chunks” to improve memory and understanding. Ekaningsih et al. (2020) this process allows individuals to group related information, making it easier to remember and process. Che Lah and Saat (2014) Chunking is an important learning strategy that aims to overcome the limitations of Short Term Memory (STM). Therefore, chunking is a strategy that can assist students in grouping words and understanding the meaning of text.

Previous studies have explored the application of chunking strategies in various contexts, such as improving fluency in speaking, retelling stories, and improving reading skills. Although these studies show the positive impact of chunking, research specifically discussing its effectiveness in improving reading comprehension in EFL students is still limited. At SMK Muhammadiyah Karanganyar, research on this strategy has also never been conducted, despite the fact that this challenge is also evident among students, particularly those in grade X, where grade X is typically the first year in vocational high school where students encounter more complex texts compared to previous grades. Therefore, this creates a gap that needs further exploration, particularly in identifying how chunking can be adapted to meet the

Vol 8, No 2 (2025): ESTEEM

specific needs of EFL students in reading comprehension tasks.

Based on the phenomena above problem as formulated as follows :

1. What problems are faced by EFL students in Reading Comprehension?
2. How is the effectiveness of Chunking Strategy to teach EFL Students' Reading Comprehension skill?

The objectives of this research are twofold. First, it aims to identify and describe the specific challenges encountered by EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students in developing their reading comprehension skills. Understanding these difficulties is essential in order to provide targeted instructional support and improve students' overall language proficiency. Second, the study seeks to examine the effectiveness of the chunking strategy as a pedagogical approach in enhancing EFL students' ability to comprehend reading texts. By evaluating the impact of this strategy, the research intends to determine whether breaking down texts into manageable chunks can significantly facilitate students' understanding and retention of information, thereby contributing to more effective and engaging reading instruction.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW***1. Reading Comprehension***

Reading comprehension refers to the process of constructing meaning from written texts, going beyond merely decoding words to understanding their deeper significance (Anderson & Pearson, 2020; Carroll & Fox, 2017; Baleghizadeh & Maryam, 2019). As stated by Tarigan (2021), reading comprehension is a form of reading that focuses on grasping the meaning of the text. This suggests that true reading involves more than just recognizing written symbols it requires the reader to engage cognitively and interpretively with the material to extract and internalize its message. Similarly, Susilawati (2023), emphasizes that the goal of reading comprehension is to enable readers to fully comprehend the substance and intent of the material they are reading.

In other words, reading comprehension is an active and purposeful process that demands interaction between the reader and the text (Arrasul et al., 2023; Martinez, 2017). It involves the use of prior knowledge, inference-making, and critical thinking to analyze and synthesize information. Effective reading comprehension enables individuals to make sense of complex ideas, identify

Vol 8, No 2 (2025): ESTEEM

key points, draw conclusions, and apply what they have read to new contexts. For EFL learners in particular, strengthening reading comprehension skills is crucial not only for academic achievement but also for broader language development, as it supports vocabulary acquisition, grammatical awareness, and overall communicative competence.

2. *Chunking Strategy*

The chunking's theory was proposed by Miller. Miller (1994) states that chunking is a cognitive strategy of breaking information into smaller, more manageable units or "chunks" to improve memory and understanding. Anggraini (2016) also state that a chunk is defined as a meaningful unit of information built from smaller pieces of information. According Anggraeni (2015), The procedure of chunking strategy to apply in teaching reading comprehension consists of five steps : Review reading strategies, Chunk the text, Paraphrase meaning, Assessment and Sharing.

3. METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach through a quasi-experimental design to investigate the effectiveness of the chunking strategy in improving reading comprehension among EFL learners (Rogers & Revesz, 2019; Sugiyono, 2021). The research was

conducted at SMK Muhammadiyah Karanganyar, targeting Grade X students as the research population. From this population, two classes X TKJ 1 and X TKJ 2 were selected as the sample, comprising a total of 62 students. One class was designated as the experimental group and received instruction utilizing the chunking strategy, while the other functioned as the control group and was taught using traditional teaching methods.

To gather data, the researcher administered both tests and questionnaires. Pre-tests and post-tests were conducted with both groups to evaluate their reading comprehension skills prior to and following the intervention. The test instruments were specifically crafted to measure the students' understanding of English reading texts (Makbul, 2021; Mauliddiyah, 2021). Furthermore, questionnaires were distributed to explore the challenges students faced in reading comprehension and to gain insights into their perceptions of the learning experience.

The data analysis process involved several key statistical procedures, including the validation of the research instruments in terms of validity and reliability, as well as tests for normality and homogeneity to ensure appropriate

Vol 8, No 2 (2025): ESTEEM

data distribution (Anufia, 2019). To examine the impact of the chunking strategy, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was utilized for within-group comparisons, and the Mann-Whitney U Test was applied to determine whether there were statistically significant differences in reading comprehension outcomes between the experimental and control groups before and after the implementation of the strategy.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Based on the result of validity test, it could be conducted there were 56 items valid because their R calculated values are higher than R table (0.3044). The valid items could be used in the research instrument. However, 7 items that were not valid are selected, and removed.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistical Analysis

	N	Range	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Pre-test Exp	32	70	30	100	69.84	20,300
Post-test Exp	32	75	25	100	78.44	19,896
Pre-test Cont	30	70	30	100	81.67	19,313
Post-test Cont	30	50	50	100	91.33	11,290

The research involved two groups: the experimental class with 32 students and the control class with 30 students. In the experimental group, the average score improved from 69.84 in the pre-test to 78.44 in the post-test, showing a positive impact of the chunking strategy despite a wide score range. The control group, taught with conventional methods, showed an increase from 81.67 to 91.33, with a notable reduction in score variability, indicating more consistent performance. Although both groups improved, the experimental class showed

Overall, the instrument shows a high level of validity, as 88.89% of the items are valid and suitable for use.

Table 1. Reliability Statistic Test

Reliability Statistics	
Statistics	Value
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.962	63

The reliability test was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha formula to determine the internal consistency of the instrument consisting of 63 items. The result shows that the Cronbach's Alpha value was 0.962, indicating a very high level of reliability. It consistently measures the intended variable and could be confidently used in further data collection or analysis.

more meaningful individual progress, especially considering their lower starting point. These findings suggest that the chunking strategy was beneficial for enhancing students' reading comprehension, particularly among those with initially weaker performance.

A normality test was executed to ascertain whether the data acquired from the experimental and control groups exhibited a normal distribution, with Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used for this purpose, and the analysis was performed using the SPSS 25 program.

The results of this test provided insight into whether parametric or non-parametric statistical methods should be

applied in further data analysis. A summary of the normality test results is presented in the following table.

Table 3. Test of Normality

Tests of Normality			
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
PreTest Experiment	0,126	32	.200 [*]
Post Test Experiment	0,192	32	0,004
PreTest Control	0,200	30	0,003
Post Test Control	0,221	30	0,001

Based on the data presented in table 3, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov significance value of only the experimental class pre-test with a sig of 0.200 which is above $\alpha = 0.05$ indicates that the data is normally distributed. On the other hand, the experimental class post-test with a significance of 0.004, the control class pre-test with a significance of 0.003 and the control class post-test of 0.001 which were less than 0.05 indicates that the data was not normally distributed. Overall, only the experimental class pre-test

results conformed to the assumption of normal distribution and the other three classes deviated from normality.

After conducting a normality test, the researcher conducted a homogeneity test to determine whether the samples from each class had the same variance. To analyze the data, researchers used Levene Statistic in the SPSS 25 program. The following is an explanation of the homogeneity test results

Table 4. Test of Homogeneity

Test of Homogeneity of Variances				
	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Based on Mean	8.998	1	60	.004
Based on Median	5.275	1	60	.025
Based on Median and with adjusted df	5.275	1	49.457	.026
Based on trimmed mean	7.880	1	60	.007

The table 4, showed that the significance value of the post-test scores for both the control and experimental classes is 0.004. Since this value was less than 0.05, this indicates that the data in both classes are inhomogeneous variant.

Based on the results of the assumption test which showed that the test score data were not normally

distributed and had inhomogeneous variances, the requirements for conducting parametric tests such as paired samples test and Independent Samples t-test were not met. Therefore, to compare the test scores between the two groups, non-parametric statistical tests were chosen, namely by using the Wilcoxon test and the Mann-Whitney U

test, which do not require normality of data distribution or homogeneity of variance.

Table 5. Test of Wilcoxon

Test Statistic		
	Post Test Exp - Pre Test Exp	Post Test Cont - Pre Test Cont
Z	-2.501b	-2.115b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.012	.034

The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used to analyze the pre-test and post-test scores in both the experimental and control groups. Its primary utility lies in determining statistically significant differences between two paired, dependent, or related measurements, particularly when the data fail to meet the assumption of normal distribution. In the context of this research, this test aimed to determine whether there was a change (increase/decrease) in test scores from the pre-test to the post-test condition of the intervention in each group (experimental and control).

Based on the table 5, on the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental class, Z value = -2.501. This is a standardized Wilcoxon test statistic. The negative sign generally indicates that the Experiment Post-test scores tend to be higher than the Experiment Pre-test scores.

The Sig (2-tailed) value was 0.012. Using the general significance level $\alpha=0.05$, since 0.012 less than 0.05, Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. It was concluded that a statistically significant difference existed between the pre-test and post-test scores within the experimental group. This indicates that the intervention provided to the experimental group exerted a significant influence on changing their scores from before to after. Given the

context of the pre-post test, this suggests a significant increase in scores.

The pre-test and post-test scores of the control class shows that Z value = -2.115. Just as before, the negative sign indicates a tendency for the Control Post-test scores to be higher than the Control Pre-test scores. The Sig. (2-tailed) is 0.034, with $\alpha=0.05$. Since 0.034 is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was also rejected. It was concluded that a statistically significant difference existed between the pre-test and post-test scores within the control group. This indicates that even in the control group, there was a significant change (most likely an increase) in scores from before to after.

Table 6. Test of Mann-Whitney U

Test Statistics ^a	
	Result
Mann-Whitney U	263.000
Wilcoxon W	791.000
Z	-3.100
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.002

An analysis employing the Mann-Whitney U Test was performed to compare 'Outcomes' between two distinct grade groups. This non-parametric test was chosen because it is a valid and appropriate method to compare two independent groups when the assumption of normality of data distribution was not met and the data was not homogeneous.

The table showed that the result of the sig value is 0.002. The significance level (α) at 0.05, the p-value or significance value is 0.002 was smaller than 0.05. This suggests that the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, it was concluded that a statistically significant difference existed in the result or outcome between the two class groups.

Discussion

The presence of a statistically significant difference between the final scores of the experimental and control groups provides compelling evidence that the chunking strategy exerts a tangible and beneficial effect on students' reading comprehension abilities. With a significance level of 0.002, the results are highly encouraging and warrant the rejection of the null hypothesis, thereby affirming the potential of chunking as a powerful instructional approach for enhancing learners' comprehension skills. These findings underscore the pedagogical value of chunking in the EFL context and are consistent with previous research by Wahid and Thais (2020), who also reported improvements in reading proficiency through the application of this strategy. Their study, along with the present findings, supports the notion that breaking texts into smaller, logically structured segments especially those that simplify grammatical structures and clarify vocabulary facilitates deeper understanding (Sutiadiningsih, 2022; Oktari, 2024).

Moreover, data collected from the post-test questionnaire revealed that many EFL students perceived the chunking strategy as beneficial in several ways. They reported increased ease in understanding texts, better retention of

information, and enhanced concentration while reading. These student perceptions further reinforce the idea that structured segmentation of texts contributes meaningfully to comprehension. This outcome parallels the conclusions drawn by Suppawittaya and Yasri (2021), who demonstrated, through a quasi-experimental design, that the chunking method significantly improved short-term memory retention among secondary school students. Their work aligns with foundational theories proposed by Revniuk and Bányi (2023) concerning cognitive processing limitations and the efficacy of information grouping.

In light of the substantial gains observed in the experimental group compared to the control group, this study highlights the chunking strategy's effectiveness in strengthening EFL learners' command of reading comprehension. Nonetheless, to fully explore its pedagogical potential, future research is recommended to investigate the long-term effects of chunking, its applicability to other language skills such as listening and writing, and its adaptability to varied educational contexts (Alharbi, 2023). Additionally, integrating chunking with technological tools or supplementary learning materials, as well as tailoring it to different proficiency levels and text genres, may further enhance its impact and instructional versatility.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the data and the interpretation of the findings, this study concludes that the chunking strategy is an effective instructional method for enhancing reading

Vol 8, No 2 (2025): ESTEEM

comprehension among EFL learners. The conclusion is supported by strong quantitative evidence showing a significant improvement in students' reading comprehension performance in the group that received chunking-based instruction compared to those taught using conventional methods. The statistical results revealed a clear distinction in performance between the two groups, indicating that the strategy contributed meaningfully to students' understanding of reading texts.

In addition to the statistical outcomes, qualitative data obtained through questionnaires provided valuable insights into students' perceptions and learning experiences. Initially, many students expressed considerable difficulty in comprehending reading materials, particularly due to limited vocabulary and challenges in understanding complex grammatical structures. However, following the implementation of the chunking strategy, students reported greater ease in interpreting texts, improved ability to identify main ideas, and increased confidence in their reading abilities. Many learners also expressed a positive attitude toward the strategy and showed openness to applying it in future learning contexts. These findings suggest that chunking not only facilitates cognitive processing of reading materials but also fosters a more engaging and less overwhelming learning experience.

Given the demonstrated benefits of the chunking strategy, this study recommends its continued application and further development within English language instruction, particularly for learners struggling with comprehension. For future research, it is advisable to explore the long-term impacts of

chunking on students' reading development across different proficiency levels and educational settings. Additionally, further investigation could examine the integration of chunking with digital learning tools or its adaptation for enhancing other language skills, such as listening and writing, which also require the processing of segmented information. Comparative studies involving other reading strategies may also yield deeper insights into how chunking stands relative to alternative methods in improving reading comprehension.

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