



THE EFFECT OF RAP STRATEGY ON EFL STUDENTS' READING AND WRITING ABILITIES

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of the Read, Ask, Put (RAP) strategy on the reading comprehension and writing achievement of Grade XI vocational students at State Vocational High School 7 Palembang. It responds to ongoing literacy challenges in vocational education, particularly students' limited ability to identify central ideas, synthesize supporting information, and produce coherent analytical exposition texts. Employing a quasi-experimental pre-test–post-test control group design, the study involved 62 students assigned to experimental and control groups. The experimental group participated in eight instructional sessions incorporating the RAP strategy, whereas the control group received traditional instruction. Data were analyzed using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test and the Mann–Whitney U Test at a significance level of $\alpha = .05$. The findings demonstrate statistically significant improvements in both reading comprehension and writing performance among students exposed to RAP instruction. These results suggest that the RAP strategy facilitates students' ability to extract essential information, structure ideas logically, and articulate arguments more coherently. Consequently, RAP can be considered an effective integrated literacy approach for EFL vocational contexts, providing pedagogical implications for aligning reading and writing instruction within vocational curricula.

Keywords: *RAP strategy, Reading, Writing, Analytical Expository Text.*

1. INTRODUCTION

English proficiency has emerged as a critical competence in the twenty-first century, extending beyond academic relevance to function as a key conduit for global communication, career mobility, and continuous learning. Amid accelerating globalization, rapid technological advancement, and increasingly interconnected economies, English operates as the principal language for international cooperation, scholarly exchange, and digital engagement (Richards, 2021; OECD, 2023). The demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the shift toward Society 5.0

have further intensified the role of English as an essential skill for navigating complex, technology-mediated environments and facilitating intercultural interaction (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2019; UNESCO, 2022). English proficiency is no longer discretionary but constitutes a foundational requirement for participation in the global knowledge economy (EF-EPI, 2024; Rosyidah et al., 2023; Melvina & Julia, 2021).

In Indonesia, English occupies a strategic position within the national education system and is mandated from junior secondary to senior secondary levels, including vocational

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high schools (Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan/SMK), with the objective of preparing learners for higher education and workforce demands (Kemendikbudristek, 2022; Peng, 2025; Ferdaus & Novita, 2023). Nevertheless, despite sustained policy commitment, empirical evidence indicates that learning outcomes remain suboptimal. The 2022 National Assessment Report revealed that SMK students' reading comprehension performance consistently fell below the national proficiency threshold. Similarly, findings from PISA 2022 demonstrate that Indonesia's reading literacy score remains markedly lower than the OECD average, highlighting a persistent literacy deficit that constrains students' capacity to critically engage with academic and occupational texts (OECD, 2023; OECD, 2023; Dorn & Jones, 2023).

These shortcomings are particularly pronounced in vocational education, where English instruction is frequently subordinated to technical skill development (Ariyanti, 2020; Fadilah et al., 2023; Azli et al., 2018). Instructional practices in many SMK classrooms continue to emphasize grammatical accuracy and discrete vocabulary acquisition, often at the expense of higher-order literacy skills such as inferential reading, critical interpretation, and coherent academic writing. Consequently, graduates commonly encounter difficulties in comprehending technical manuals, interpreting professional correspondence, and producing structured written reports competencies that are essential for employability in both national and international labor markets (Nguyen, 2021; Akram et al., 2022; Boudah, 2018).

Classroom observations conducted at State Vocational High School 7 Palembang during the 2024/2025 academic year corroborated these challenges. Grade XI students exhibited substantial difficulty in identifying central ideas, synthesizing

supporting details, and recognizing the rhetorical organization of analytical exposition texts. Their written compositions were frequently characterized by limited coherence, weak argumentative structure, and grammatical inaccuracy, including underdeveloped thesis statements and insufficient evidential support. These findings are consistent with previous research documenting literacy constraints among Indonesian EFL learners, such as restricted lexical repertoire, inadequate grammatical control, and difficulty processing syntactically complex texts (Abidin et al., 2022; Siregar et al., 2021). Moreover, Hartini and Ardini (2024) underscore vocabulary knowledge as a crucial predictor of both reading comprehension and writing proficiency, particularly in contexts where learners' exposure to English is largely classroom-bound.

Addressing these persistent literacy challenges necessitates instructional approaches that conceptualize reading and writing as interdependent, mutually reinforcing processes rather than discrete skills. One promising pedagogical framework is the Read, Ask, Put (RAP) strategy, initially proposed by Mason & Smith (2021) and subsequently adapted for diverse learning contexts by Drake & Reid (2020). RAP is a metacognitive strategy comprising three sequential stages: engaging closely with a text, generating guiding questions to identify main ideas and supporting details, and restating information in one's own words. This structured process fosters active engagement, enhances self-regulation, and strengthens paraphrasing abilities that underpin both comprehension and written expression (Mastropieri et al., 2018; Sholeh et al., 2023).

While previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of RAP in improving reading comprehension, including within Indonesian secondary school contexts

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(Ningsih, 2021; Abidin et al., 2022), empirical investigations into its impact on writing development remain limited. In particular, research exploring RAP as an integrated literacy strategy in vocational education and within genre-specific contexts such as analytical exposition writing is scarce. This gap reflects both a skill integration deficit where the reciprocal relationship between reading and writing has been insufficiently examined and a contextual limitation, as vocational learners' distinct literacy needs remain underrepresented in the literature.

In response, the present study implements RAP as an integrated instructional approach to enhance both reading comprehension and writing performance in analytical exposition texts among Grade XI vocational students. This focus is aligned with the interactive model of literacy advanced by (Grabe & Stoller, 2019), which conceptualizes reading and writing as sharing cognitive, linguistic, and discourse-level resources that mutually reinforce development. Theoretically, this study contributes to scholarship on metacognitive strategy instruction in EFL contexts; pedagogically, it offers a practical and replicable framework for vocational educators seeking to address enduring literacy challenges. Ultimately, the findings are intended to inform instructional practice, curriculum design, and policy initiatives aimed at strengthening literacy outcomes in Indonesia's vocational education sector, in line with 21st-century competencies emphasizing communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving.

2. METHODS

This study employed a quasi-experimental design with a non-equivalent pre-test-post-test control group structure, chosen for its suitability in educational settings where random assignment of participants is impractical or unethical

(Creswell & Plano Clark, 2023; Fraenkel et al., 2021). This design enabled the researchers to compare the effects of the Read, Ask, Put (RAP) strategy against conventional instruction, while accounting for initial differences in participants' reading and writing abilities.

The research was conducted in the second semester of the 2024/2025 academic year at State Vocational High School 7 of Palembang, Indonesia. The population comprised all Grade XI students enrolled in the academic year, with a purposive sampling technique used to select participants based on their similar academic backgrounds, class schedules, and accessibility (Etikan et al., 2018). A total of 62 students participated in the study, equally divided into an experimental group (n = 31) and a control group (n = 31). Both groups were taught by the same English teacher to minimize variability in instructional delivery.

Two primary instruments were used to measure the dependent variables:

1. Reading Comprehension Test, designed to assess students' ability to identify main ideas, recognize supporting details, and infer meaning from analytical exposition texts.
2. Writing Performance Test, adapted from the ESL Composition Profile by (Hiluf & Alemu, 2024; Sugebo et al., 2025), which evaluated five dimensions content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics each rated on a scale that allows for detailed diagnostic feedback.

Instrument validity was established through expert judgment involving three senior EFL lecturers with experience in test design and literacy assessment. Reliability was confirmed through a pilot study conducted with a comparable group of students from a different vocational school, yielding Cronbach's alpha coefficients of

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0.83 for reading and 0.87 for writing, indicating high internal consistency (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2019).

The treatment procedure spanned eight instructional sessions over four weeks. In the experimental group, each session followed the three-step RAP sequence:

1. Read – Students read each paragraph carefully, focusing on understanding the overall meaning.
2. Ask – Students generated and answered questions about the main ideas and key supporting details, fostering metacognitive engagement with the text.
3. Put – Students paraphrased the information in their own words, both orally and in writing, thereby linking reading comprehension to writing production.

These activities were supplemented with collaborative discussions, guided practice, and teacher feedback to reinforce comprehension and textual organization.

The control group received instruction following the school's existing curriculum, which primarily consisted of teacher explanations, textbook-based exercises, and individual writing assignments. This approach did not involve explicit metacognitive strategy training or structured integration of reading and writing tasks.

For data analysis, descriptive statistics were first used to summarize pre-test and

post-test scores. To test the research hypotheses, non-parametric tests were chosen due to the sample size and distribution characteristics. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used to examine within-group differences between pre-test and post-test scores, while the Mann–Whitney U Test compared gain scores between the experimental and control groups (Pallant, 2020). Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$, and effect sizes were calculated using Cohen's d to determine the magnitude of the treatment effect (Lakens, 2018). All analyses were performed using SPSS version 22.

This methodological framework ensured both internal validity through the use of parallel groups and consistent teaching conditions and external validity through the use of a real classroom environment representative of typical vocational school settings.

3. RESULTS

Effect of RAP Strategy on Students' Reading Comprehension

The descriptive statistics in Table 1 show that the experimental group, which was taught using the RAP strategy, experienced a considerable increase in reading comprehension scores, from a mean of 64.71 in the pre-test to 82.42 in the post-test. This represents an average gain of 17.71 points. Meanwhile, the control group, taught using conventional methods, improved from 65.10 to 72.26, with a gain of 7.16 points.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Reading Comprehension Scores

Group	N	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Gain Score
Experimental	31	64.71	82.42	17.71
Control	31	65.10	72.26	7.16

Note: Higher gain scores indicate greater improvement in reading comprehension.

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The Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test results showed a significant improvement in the experimental group's reading comprehension scores ($Z = -4.872$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that the RAP strategy effectively enhanced reading comprehension. In contrast, although the control group also showed improvement, the increase was less pronounced. The Mann–Whitney U Test confirmed a statistically significant difference between the post-test scores of the experimental and control groups ($U = 216.000$, $p < 0.05$), demonstrating the superiority of the RAP strategy over conventional methods in fostering reading comprehension.

These results explicitly answer the first research question, confirming that the RAP strategy positively impacts students' reading comprehension and that its effect is greater than that of traditional instructional methods.

Effect of RAP Strategy on Students' Writing Ability

Table 2 summarizes the descriptive statistics for writing performance. In the experimental group, the mean score increased from 62.97 in the pre-test to 80.65 in the post-test, resulting in a gain of 17.68 points. The control group's mean increased from 63.39 to 71.16, with a gain of 7.77 points.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Writing Ability Scores

Group	N	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Gain Score
Experimental	31	62.97	80.65	17.68
Control	31	63.39	71.16	7.77

Note: Writing scores were assessed based on content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics.

The Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test indicated a statistically significant improvement in the writing scores of the experimental group ($Z = -4.821$, $p < 0.05$). The control group also showed improvement, but the gain was considerably smaller. The Mann–Whitney U Test comparing post-test scores between the two groups revealed a significant difference ($U = 220.500$, $p < 0.05$), favoring the experimental group.

These findings answer the second research question by confirming that the RAP strategy substantially improves students' writing performance, outperforming conventional instructional approaches.

Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

The overall results of hypothesis testing for both reading comprehension and writing ability are presented in Table 3. All null hypotheses (H_0) were rejected, indicating that the RAP strategy had a statistically significant positive effect on students' literacy skills.

Table 3. Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Variable	Test Used	Result Decision (p) on H_0	Interpretation
Reading (Exp. group)	Wilcoxon Signed Rank	< 0.05 Rejected	Significant improvement
Reading (Exp. vs Ctrl)	Mann–Whitney U	< 0.05 Rejected	Significant difference

Variable	Test Used	Result (p)	Decision on H ₀	Interpretation
Writing (Exp. group)	Wilcoxon Signed Rank	< 0.05	Rejected	Significant improvement
Writing (Exp. vs Ctrl)	Mann–Whitney U	< 0.05	Rejected	Significant difference

The data collectively show that the RAP strategy not only improves both reading and writing skills within the experimental group but also results in significantly higher post-test scores compared to the control group. This confirms the effectiveness of RAP as an integrated literacy instruction strategy in the vocational high school context.

4. DISCUSSION

The primary aim of this study was to investigate the impact of the Read, Ask, Put (RAP) strategy on the reading comprehension and writing proficiency of Grade XI students at State Vocational High School 7 Palembang. The findings reveal that students exposed to RAP instruction outperformed those receiving conventional instruction in both reading and writing. The discussion that follows interprets these results in relation to the research objectives, relevant theoretical frameworks, and previous empirical studies.

With respect to the first research question, the findings demonstrate that the RAP strategy significantly enhanced students' reading comprehension. The experimental group achieved a post-test gain of 17.71 points, substantially higher than the 7.16-point gain recorded by the control group. Statistical analyses using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test confirmed significant within-group improvement ($p < 0.05$), while the Mann–Whitney U Test

indicated a significant difference between the two groups. These results provide strong evidence that RAP effectively supports reading comprehension development.

This outcome aligns with the theoretical foundation of RAP as a metacognitive reading strategy that promotes active engagement through self-questioning and paraphrasing (Ramadhanti & Yanda, 2021). As noted by Paris and Hamilton (2021), metacognitive strategies enhance comprehension by enabling learners to monitor, evaluate, and regulate their understanding. In this study, the “Ask” component required students to identify main ideas and supporting details, encouraging deeper cognitive processing and reducing passive reading behaviors.

The present findings are consistent with earlier studies reporting the positive effects of RAP on reading comprehension among Indonesian EFL learners (Abidin et al., 2022; Sholeh et al., 2023). However, this study extends prior research by demonstrating RAP's effectiveness in a vocational high school context, where students typically exhibit lower academic reading engagement (Ariyanti, 2020). The significant improvement observed suggests that RAP is not only suitable for general secondary education but also responsive to the specific literacy challenges faced by vocational learners.

The second research question examined the effect of RAP on students' writing ability. The results indicate that the

experimental group experienced a gain of 17.68 points, compared to 7.77 points in the control group, with both the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test and the Mann–Whitney U Test confirming statistical significance ($p < 0.05$). These findings suggest that RAP exerts a positive influence on writing development.

One plausible explanation for this improvement lies in the paraphrasing component of RAP, which requires learners to restate textual information in their own words. This process closely parallels key stages of writing, particularly planning, drafting, and revising (Bonk & Graham, 2023). Through repeated practice in summarizing and reorganizing ideas during reading, students develop greater control over idea organization, lexical choice, and grammatical accuracy skills that are directly transferable to writing tasks.

These findings corroborate Nguyen's (2021) conclusion that reading strategies emphasizing summarization can enhance EFL learners' written argumentation. In the current study, the structured nature of RAP supported students in producing analytical exposition texts characterized by clearer thesis statements, more coherent paragraph development, and more effective use of supporting evidence. The results also reinforce the work of Lestari and Widiati (2022), who demonstrated that explicit integration of reading and writing instruction leads to significant gains in both domains.

Taken together, the findings indicate that RAP functions as an effective integrated literacy strategy, simultaneously strengthening receptive and productive language skills. This dual impact is particularly noteworthy given that most RAP-related studies in the Indonesian context have focused primarily on reading comprehension (Ningsih, 2021; Abidin et al., 2022). By empirically demonstrating improvements in both reading and writing,

the present study positions RAP as a pedagogical bridge between textual input and written output, supporting the interactive model of literacy, which conceptualizes reading and writing as mutually reinforcing processes.

From a theoretical perspective, the effectiveness of RAP can be explained through its alignment with Schema Theory and Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller et al., 2019). The "Ask" stage encourages learners to activate and connect prior knowledge with new information, while the "Put" stage requires them to reorganize and rearticulate content, thereby reducing extraneous cognitive load and facilitating schema construction. These processes contribute to improved comprehension, retention, and written expression.

This study makes several contributions to the existing literature. First, it demonstrates the applicability and effectiveness of RAP in a vocational high school setting, where English instruction is often marginalized in favor of technical subjects. Second, it provides empirical evidence that RAP can enhance writing ability in addition to reading comprehension, addressing a notable gap in Indonesian EFL research. Third, by integrating RAP with the teaching of analytical exposition texts, the study offers a practical instructional model for developing critical thinking, logical reasoning, and persuasive writing skills.

The findings also carry important pedagogical implications. EFL teachers in vocational schools may adopt RAP to design more interactive and cognitively engaging literacy instruction that integrates reading and writing objectives. At a broader level, curriculum developers and policymakers may consider incorporating RAP-based activities into national literacy initiatives aimed at strengthening vocational students' academic literacy and workplace communication competencies.

5. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the impact of the Read, Ask, Put (RAP) strategy on the reading comprehension and writing proficiency of Grade XI students at State Vocational High School 7 Palembang. Utilizing a quasi-experimental pre-test–post-test control group design, the findings demonstrate that RAP instruction resulted in statistically significant improvements in both reading and writing outcomes when compared with conventional teaching methods. Students in the experimental group exhibited enhanced ability to identify central ideas, integrate supporting details, and construct coherent arguments in analytical exposition texts, as reflected in higher gain scores and significant results from the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank and Mann–Whitney U tests.

The results confirm RAP as an effective metacognitive strategy that promotes active textual engagement through systematic questioning and paraphrasing, thereby strengthening both receptive and productive language skills. Theoretically, these findings support the interactive model of literacy, which conceptualizes reading and writing as interrelated processes, and extend prior research by evidencing RAP's contribution to writing development alongside reading comprehension in EFL contexts. Moreover, the outcomes are consistent with Schema Theory and Cognitive Load Theory, indicating that structured information processing reduces extraneous cognitive demands while facilitating schema formation, resulting in improved comprehension and written expression.

From a pedagogical perspective, this study provides a practical framework for integrating reading and writing instruction in vocational high schools, where learners often encounter persistent challenges in academic English. The structured sequence embedded

in RAP reading, questioning, and rephrasing can be readily embedded within classroom instruction to foster critical thinking, enhance textual coherence, and improve overall language proficiency. In light of Indonesia's emphasis on 21st-century competencies such as communication, reasoning, and problem-solving, the implementation of RAP holds clear potential to support national educational objectives and better prepare vocational students for academic advancement and workplace communication.

In sum, this research not only substantiates the pedagogical effectiveness of RAP but also addresses a significant gap in the literature by demonstrating its dual impact on reading and writing within a vocational education context. The study thus contributes both theoretically and practically, offering evidence-based insights for educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers committed to strengthening literacy outcomes in EFL education.

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