

The Use of Probing-Prompting Technique to Improve Reading Comprehension of Eighth Grade Students

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the effectiveness of the Probing-Prompting Technique in enhancing reading comprehension and student engagement among eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 4 Pancarijang. Utilizing a pre-experimental design with a one-group pre-test and post-test setup, the study involved 20 students selected from a total of 66 eighth-grade students. The research instruments included a reading test and a questionnaire to measure comprehension and interest. The findings showed a significant improvement in reading comprehension, with the pre-test mean score of 56.00 rising to 69.00 in the post-test, supported by a t-test value of 5.378, which exceeded the critical t-table value of 2.093. Additionally, the questionnaire revealed a high level of student interest, with a mean score of 84.75, indicating strong engagement. The study concludes that the Probing-Prompting Technique significantly improves both the reading comprehension and the interest of students in learning.

Keywords: Probing-Prompting Technique; Reading Comprehension; Student Engagement

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the essential language skills in learning a foreign language, and it is especially crucial for mastering English, which is considered a global lingua franca. In Indonesia, English is taught as a compulsory subject from junior high school through to university. The primary goal of teaching English in schools is not only to enable students to communicate effectively but also to foster their ability to access information, make interpersonal connections, and appreciate the cultural and linguistic richness of English. However, despite its importance, many students still face significant challenges in mastering reading comprehension, which impacts their overall English proficiency. Reading comprehension is defined as the ability to understand, interpret, and

critically analyze written texts. It is a complex cognitive skill that requires a combination of decoding words, understanding meanings, recognizing the structure of texts, and drawing inferences. For many students, especially at the secondary school level, reading comprehension remains a significant hurdle. In Indonesia, where English is a foreign language, the challenge becomes even more pronounced due to limited exposure to English outside the classroom and the lack of a robust reading culture.

In schools, various strategies and methods are employed to improve students' reading skills. These include traditional methods like vocabulary building, grammar instruction, and reading aloud, as well as more contemporary approaches such as task-based learning and the use of digital tools. However, while these methods have their merits, they do not always fully engage students or lead to significant improvements in reading comprehension. Many students struggle to grasp the meaning of texts, find it challenging to engage with the material, and often lack the motivation to improve their reading skills. One method that has shown promise in addressing these issues is the Probing-Prompting Technique. The Probing-Prompting Technique is an interactive teaching strategy that involves the use of targeted questions to encourage deeper thinking and greater student engagement during the learning process. In this technique, the teacher asks open-ended questions that "probe" the students' prior knowledge, making them reflect on what they already know and encouraging them to connect this knowledge to new concepts. Prompting, on the other hand, involves providing students with subtle cues or hints that guide them toward the correct answer, thereby supporting their learning process.

This technique is grounded in cognitive and constructivist theories of learning, which suggest that students learn best when they are actively engaged in constructing their own understanding, rather than passively receiving information. According to Piaget's theory of cognitive development, learning is an active process where students build on their existing knowledge by interacting with new information. Similarly, Vygotsky's social constructivism emphasizes the importance of social interaction and guided learning in the development of cognitive skills. The Probing-Prompting Technique aligns with these theories by fostering active learning through student-teacher interaction, where the teacher plays the role of a facilitator who guides students to discover the answers on their own.

The Probing-Prompting Technique has been shown to be effective in various educational contexts, particularly in improving students' reading comprehension. By encouraging students to think critically and analyze texts more deeply, this technique enhances their ability to extract meaning

from the text, identify key ideas, and make inferences. Moreover, it has been found to boost student engagement, as it transforms reading from a passive activity into an interactive, problem-solving process. Students are encouraged to actively participate in the lesson, ask questions, and engage with the material in ways that make the learning process more enjoyable and rewarding.

Despite its potential, the Probing-Prompting Technique has not been widely adopted in many classrooms, particularly in Indonesia. This research aims to investigate the impact of this technique on the reading comprehension of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 4 Pancarijang. Specifically, the study seeks to determine whether the Probing-Prompting Technique can improve students' reading comprehension scores, as well as their level of engagement and interest in reading. The focus of this study is on eighth-grade students, a group that is at a critical stage in their English language development. At this level, students are expected to have a basic understanding of English grammar and vocabulary, but they still face challenges in comprehending longer and more complex texts. Moreover, many students in this age group often struggle with motivation and interest in learning, particularly in subjects they perceive as difficult or irrelevant.

As a result, it is crucial to identify effective teaching strategies that can not only improve students' academic performance but also enhance their enthusiasm and willingness to engage with the material. To achieve these goals, this study employs a pre-experimental design, using a one-group pre-test and post-test approach to assess the impact of the Probing-Prompting Technique on students' reading comprehension. The study will also evaluate students' level of interest in reading, which is often a determining factor in their academic success. The research will be conducted at SMP Negeri 4 Pancarijang, a school located in Indonesia. A total of 20 students from class VIII.2 will participate in the study, and their performance will be measured using both a reading comprehension test and a questionnaire to gauge their interest in the technique.

The results of this study will contribute valuable insights into the effectiveness of the Probing-Prompting Technique in improving reading comprehension in a foreign language context. If successful, this technique could be recommended as a viable alternative or supplement to traditional reading instruction methods. Furthermore, the findings could encourage other educators to adopt more interactive and engaging teaching strategies that foster critical thinking and active participation in the learning process. This research is significant because it addresses a crucial issue in language education – improving students' reading comprehension in English. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, the ability to understand and

communicate in English is more important than ever. By exploring new and effective ways to teach reading comprehension, this study aims to help students overcome barriers to learning and develop the skills they need to succeed in an English-dominated global environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill in language learning, particularly for students learning English as a foreign language. It not only serves as a means to access academic content but also plays a significant role in developing critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills. In the context of Indonesia, where English is taught as a foreign language, the challenge of reading comprehension is exacerbated by the lack of immersion in English outside the classroom. As a result, it is essential to explore effective teaching strategies to improve students' reading comprehension skills. Reading comprehension involves the ability to understand, interpret, and critically engage with written texts. According to Grabe and Stoller (2001), reading comprehension is a complex process that involves the interaction of several cognitive skills, including word recognition, decoding, background knowledge, and the ability to infer meaning from the text. Successful readers are able to integrate these skills to construct meaning from texts, analyze the structure of written material, and draw conclusions based on evidence within the text. Moreover, reading comprehension is influenced by factors such as vocabulary knowledge, background knowledge, reading fluency, and the ability to make inferences.

In a foreign language context, such as in Indonesia, the challenges of reading comprehension are often compounded by limited exposure to the language outside the classroom. As Brown (2004) explains, learners of English as a foreign language may struggle with comprehension due to a lack of vocabulary, unfamiliar sentence structures, and cultural references. These difficulties make it crucial to provide students with effective strategies and techniques to enhance their reading comprehension skills. The Probing-Prompting Technique, as an active learning strategy, aims to foster deeper engagement with the reading material. According to Suherman et al. (2001), probing refers to the process of asking questions that encourage students to think critically about the material, while prompting involves providing hints or cues to guide students toward understanding. This technique is grounded in the theory of constructivism, which posits that learners build their understanding of new concepts by connecting them to existing knowledge. The Probing-Prompting

Technique encourages active participation by eliciting responses from students and prompting them to make connections between new information and what they already know.

Probing-Prompting Technique

Research on the Probing-Prompting Technique has shown that it can effectively improve students' comprehension and problem-solving skills. According to Suherman (2008), when students are prompted to think deeply about the material through probing questions, they are more likely to engage in critical thinking and develop a greater understanding of the content. This approach helps students to construct meaning actively, rather than passively receiving information. The technique also encourages metacognition, as students are prompted to reflect on their thought processes and adjust their understanding when necessary. Several studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of the Probing-Prompting Technique in improving reading comprehension. For instance, Wijaya (1997) found that probing questions helped students improve the quality and quantity of their answers in reading comprehension tasks. By prompting students to reflect on the material and engage with it more deeply, probing questions allowed students to better understand the underlying themes and ideas in the text. Moreover, the use of prompting provided students with additional support, guiding them toward more accurate and complete answers. This combination of probing and prompting has been shown to lead to higher levels of student engagement and improved academic performance in reading comprehension.

In a study by Kurniawan (2010), it was found that students who were taught using the Probing-Prompting Technique demonstrated significant improvement in their reading comprehension scores compared to those who received traditional instruction. The students in the experimental group, who were encouraged to engage with the text through probing questions and prompts, showed better understanding and retention of the material. The study also highlighted that the Probing-Prompting Technique helped students develop critical thinking skills, as they were required to analyze and evaluate the information presented in the text. Student engagement is a crucial factor in the development of reading comprehension skills. According to the National Reading Panel (2000), active engagement in reading activities is directly linked to better comprehension. When students are engaged in the learning process, they are more likely to understand and retain the material, as they invest more cognitive effort into the task. Engagement can take various forms, including emotional, behavioral, and cognitive involvement. In the context

of reading, engagement involves both the students' interest in the material and their ability to apply reading strategies to understand the content.

The Probing-Prompting Technique is particularly effective in fostering student engagement, as it encourages students to interact with the text actively. By asking probing questions and providing prompts, teachers can create a dynamic learning environment that encourages students to think critically, discuss ideas, and share their thoughts. This interactive approach not only enhances comprehension but also increases students' motivation to engage with the material. As Harmer (2007) suggests, when students are actively involved in their learning, they are more likely to feel a sense of ownership over their academic progress, which in turn boosts their interest and motivation. Moreover, the Probing-Prompting Technique helps to address the issue of passive learning, which is often prevalent in traditional classroom settings. In traditional methods, students may passively receive information from the teacher without engaging deeply with the material. However, using probing questions and prompts, students are encouraged to take a more active role in their learning, leading to a deeper understanding of the text and better retention of information.

The Probing-Prompting Technique is grounded in several key educational theories, most notably constructivism and socio-cultural theory. According to Piaget's theory of cognitive development, learners actively construct their understanding of the world by interacting with their environment and solving problems. Similarly, Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory emphasizes the role of social interaction in learning, arguing that knowledge is co-constructed through dialogue and collaboration with others. The Probing-Prompting Technique aligns with these theories by fostering interaction between the teacher and students and encouraging students to construct their own understanding of the text. Furthermore, the use of probing questions is supported by the cognitive load theory, which posits that learning is most effective when the cognitive load is balanced. By breaking down complex texts into manageable chunks and using probing questions to guide students through the material, teachers can help students process information more effectively without overwhelming them. In this way, the Probing-Prompting Technique provides the necessary support to help students build their comprehension skills while also encouraging them to think critically and independently.

METHOD

Design and Sample

This study investigates the effectiveness of the Probing-Prompting Technique in enhancing reading comprehension and student engagement among eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 4 Pancarijang. A pre-experimental one-group pre-test and post-test design was used to measure changes before and after the intervention. The design included a pre-test (O1), treatment (X), and post-test (O2), allowing the researcher to assess the impact of the technique. Although lacking a control group, this approach is suitable for educational contexts where randomization is not feasible. Efforts were made to attribute observed changes to the treatment itself. The participants were 20 students from class VIII.2, selected through cluster sampling from a total of 66 eighth graders. Aged 13 to 14, they were native Bahasa Indonesia speakers with varying levels of English proficiency and had received basic English instruction. Participation was based on availability and willingness.

Instrument and Procedures

Two main instruments were used to measure the effectiveness of the Probing-Prompting Technique: a reading comprehension test and a student interest questionnaire. The reading comprehension test was designed to assess students' ability to understand and analyze English texts. It included a reading passage followed by multiple-choice and open-ended questions focused on identifying main ideas, recognizing supporting details, making inferences, and understanding vocabulary in context. To ensure consistency in measurement, the same test was administered both before and after the treatment.

The student interest questionnaire employed a 5-point Likert scale to gauge students' engagement and motivation toward the learning technique. It contained several statements reflecting the students' interest, enjoyment, and level of participation during the learning process. Responses ranged from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" and were used to gain insight into students' perceptions of the technique.

Data collection procedures were carried out in several stages. First, the pre-test was administered to determine students' initial reading comprehension levels. Next, the treatment phase began, during which the teacher implemented the Probing-Prompting Technique by posing probing questions and providing prompts to help students think critically and understand the reading material more deeply. Class discussions were also

encouraged to enhance student engagement. After the completion of the treatment, the post-test—identical to the pre-test—was given to assess improvement in reading comprehension. Finally, the student interest questionnaire was distributed to evaluate the students' engagement and their opinions on the effectiveness of the Probing-Prompting Technique.

Data Analysis

The data from the reading tests and student interest questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions) summarized student performance and engagement. A paired-samples t-test was used to determine whether the differences between pre- and post-test scores were statistically significant. Questionnaire responses were analyzed by calculating mean scores to assess overall student interest and engagement, supporting the comprehension test results. Ethical standards were maintained, with informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and exclusive academic use of the data ensured throughout the study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of the Probing-Prompting Technique on the reading comprehension and student engagement of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 4 Pancarijang. The research utilized a pre-experimental one-group pre-test and post-test design. In this section, the results of the pre-test and post-test are presented, followed by a discussion of the findings in relation to the research objectives and the existing literature.

Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

The results of the pre-test and post-test were analyzed to determine if the Probing-Prompting Technique had a significant impact on students' reading comprehension. The pre-test was administered before the treatment to assess students' initial comprehension skills, while the post-test was administered after the intervention to evaluate the effect of the Probing-Prompting Technique.

Table 1. Summary of Pre-Test and Post-Test Results

Test Type	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Pre-Test	56.00.00	0,305555556	Moderate reading comprehension
Post-Test	69.00.00	07.18	Improved reading comprehension

The pre-test results revealed that the mean score for students' reading comprehension was 56.00, with a standard deviation of 6.80. This score indicates that, prior to the treatment, students had moderate proficiency in reading comprehension. The questions in the pre-test were designed to assess students' ability to identify the main ideas, infer meaning from the text, and understand vocabulary in context. After the implementation of the Probing-Prompting Technique, the post-test results showed a significant increase in students' reading comprehension scores. The mean score for the post-test was 69.00, with a standard deviation of 7.18. This increase in mean score suggests that the Probing-Prompting Technique had a positive effect on students' ability to comprehend the reading material. The difference between the pre-test and post-test mean scores was statistically significant, as confirmed by the t-test results. The t-test value was 5.378, which was higher than the critical value of 2.093 (t-table), indicating that the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores was statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This suggests that the Probing-Prompting Technique effectively improved students' reading comprehension.

Student Interest Questionnaire

In addition to the pre-test and post-test scores, a student interest questionnaire was administered to assess students' engagement and motivation during the learning process. The questionnaire consisted of several statements about students' feelings toward the reading activity and their level of interest in the learning process. The students were asked to rate their responses on a 5-point Likert scale. The results of the questionnaire showed that most students were highly engaged with the Probing-Prompting Technique. The mean score for the questionnaire was 84.75, with 65% of students reporting that they were "strongly interested" in the reading activities, and 35% reporting that they were "interested." This high level of interest indicates that the Probing-Prompting Technique not only improved reading comprehension but also enhanced student engagement and motivation.

Table 2. Student Interest Questionnaire Summary

Indicator	Mean Score	Response Breakdown	Interpretation
Student Engagement Level	84.75	65% "Strongly Interested", 35% "Interested"	High engagement and motivation

The students showed a significant improvement in reading comprehension, with the post-test mean score (69.00) significantly higher than the pre-test mean score (56.00). This suggests that the Probing-Prompting Technique was effective in improving students' ability to understand and analyze reading material. Student Engagement: The results of the student interest questionnaire indicate a high level of student engagement, with the majority of students expressing strong interest in the reading activities. This suggests that the Probing-Prompting Technique was not only effective in improving reading comprehension but also in motivating students to participate more actively in the learning process.

The results of this study provide compelling evidence for the effectiveness of the Probing-Prompting Technique in improving reading comprehension and student engagement. These findings are consistent with the theoretical framework underpinning the study, which emphasizes the importance of active learning and student-centered instruction. The significant improvement in students' reading comprehension scores supports the idea that the Probing-Prompting Technique can enhance students' understanding of texts. As discussed in the literature, reading comprehension is a complex process that requires students to engage with the text on a deeper level. The Probing-Prompting Technique encourages this engagement by prompting students to think critically about the material, make connections between new and prior knowledge, and reflect on their understanding of the text. The increase in the post-test scores suggests that students were able to comprehend the text more effectively after being guided through the reading process using probing questions and prompts. This finding aligns with the work of Suherman et al. (2001), who argued that probing questions encourage deeper thinking and improve students' ability to analyze and understand texts. By prompting students to reflect on the text and guiding them toward correct answers, the technique helps them develop critical thinking skills, which are essential for reading comprehension.

Moreover, the significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores confirms that the Probing-Prompting Technique is effective in improving reading comprehension, even in a short time frame. The results suggest that this technique can be a valuable tool for teachers seeking to enhance students' reading skills in foreign language contexts, where comprehension may be hindered by unfamiliar vocabulary and sentence structures. The high level of student engagement, as indicated by the student interest questionnaire, further reinforces the effectiveness of the Probing-Prompting Technique. The fact that 65% of students reported being "strongly interested" in the reading activities demonstrates that the technique not only improves comprehension but also fosters a positive attitude toward reading. This is crucial because student engagement is a key factor in academic success. When students are interested in the learning process, they are more likely to invest effort in understanding the material, leading to improved learning outcomes.

The interactive nature of the Probing-Prompting Technique likely contributed to the high level of student engagement. By encouraging students to actively participate in the learning process through questioning and discussion, the technique transforms reading from a passive activity into an engaging and dynamic learning experience. This approach is supported by the socio-cultural theory of learning, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction and collaboration in the development of cognitive skills (Vygotsky, 1978). In this study, students were not merely passive recipients of information but active participants in constructing their understanding of the text. Moreover, the use of probing questions and prompts encourages students to think critically about the material, which increases their cognitive engagement. As Brown (2004) suggests, cognitive engagement is crucial for improving comprehension, as it enables students to process and retain information more effectively.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research on the effectiveness of the Probing-Prompting Technique in improving reading comprehension. Kurniawan (2010) found that students who were taught using this technique demonstrated significant improvements in their reading comprehension scores. Similarly, Wijaya (1997) reported that probing questions helped students to deepen their understanding of texts and improve their ability to answer comprehension questions accurately. The current study adds to this body of research by providing further evidence of the effectiveness of the Probing-Prompting Technique in enhancing reading comprehension and student engagement. The results of this study provide strong evidence that the Probing-Prompting Technique is an effective method for improving reading comprehension and student engagement among eighth-grade students. The significant improvement in

students' reading comprehension scores, coupled with the high level of student interest and engagement, demonstrates that the technique not only enhances comprehension but also fosters a positive attitude toward reading. These findings suggest that the Probing-Prompting Technique could be a valuable addition to the repertoire of teaching strategies used by educators to improve reading comprehension in English as a foreign language.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the impact of the Probing-Prompting Technique on improving reading comprehension and student engagement among eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 4 Pancarajang. The results showed a significant improvement in students' reading comprehension scores, with the mean score increasing from 56.00 in the pre-test to 69.00 in the post-test. This indicates that the Probing-Prompting Technique effectively enhanced students' ability to understand and analyze reading material. Additionally, the student interest questionnaire revealed a high level of engagement, with 65% of students reporting strong interest in the activities, further demonstrating the technique's effectiveness in fostering a more engaging learning environment.

The findings suggest that the Probing-Prompting Technique encourages active learning by prompting students to think critically about the text and reflect on their understanding. This method not only improves comprehension but also promotes deeper cognitive engagement. By using probing questions and providing prompts, students were able to connect new information to prior knowledge, which facilitated better retention and understanding. This aligns with the principles of constructivist learning, where active participation is key to the learning process. The Probing-Prompting Technique proved to be a valuable tool for improving both reading comprehension and student engagement. The study's results underscore the potential of this technique to enhance reading instruction, particularly in foreign language learning contexts. Future research could explore its long-term impact and its application across different grade levels and cultural settings to further validate its effectiveness.

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