IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION ACHIEVEMENT BY USING PROJECT-BASED LEARNING (PBL) STRATEGY

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Abstract: Reading is a fundamental skill that enhances comprehension, critical thinking, and effective communication. However, many tenth-grade students at senior high schools in Palembang struggle with reading comprehension, which negatively impacts their academic performance. Addressing these challenges is essential to improving literacy and cognitive skills. To bridge this gap, the researcher conducted a quasi-experimental investigation into the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning (PBL) using storyboard media to enhance reading instruction. The study aimed to determine whether PBL with storyboards led to a significant difference in reading comprehension compared to traditional methods and whether students showed measurable improvement after the intervention. A pretest and post-test non-equivalent groups design was employed, involving 64 students from two different classes. Data were collected through pretests and post-tests and analyzed using independent sample t-tests and paired sample t-tests in SPSS 26. The results provided compelling evidence of the intervention's effectiveness. The independent sample t-test yielded a highly significant p-value of 0.000 and a t-value of 4.855, confirming a substantial difference between the experimental and control groups. Additionally, the paired sample t-test revealed a p-value of 0.000 and a t-value of 22.272, demonstrating a significant improvement in students' reading comprehension after the intervention. These findings highlight the potential of PBL with storyboard media as an effective instructional approach to enhance students' reading comprehension.
Keywords: *reading, comprehension, project-based learning, storyboard*

INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill in English language learning, particularly in Indonesia, where it forms a significant part of national examinations. Despite its importance, many students struggle with understanding texts due to factors such as limited vocabulary, complex sentence structures, and ineffective

reading strategies. Previous studies have explored various instructional methods to enhance reading comprehension, including Project-Based Learning (PBL). However, gaps remain in the existing research regarding the effectiveness of PBL in different educational contexts, particularly at the senior high school level with a focus on reading narrative texts.

Several studies have examined the impact of PBL on language learning. For instance, Agustiawati (2022) found that PBL positively influenced vocabulary and speaking skills among junior high school students, but their study was limited by its small sample size. Ariani (2023) investigated the combination of PBL and collaborative strategic reading and highlighted its effectiveness in improving language skills, though concerns about result reliability were raised due to the short duration of the intervention. Similarly, Helsanita (2014) demonstrated that collaborative learning improved reading comprehension but noted potential limitations in sample selection techniques.

While these studies confirm the benefits of PBL, they primarily focus on younger students, different skill sets, or short-term implementations. There is a lack of research examining the long-term effects of PBL on reading comprehension at the senior high school level, particularly in narrative texts. Additionally, previous studies have not extensively explored the integration of PBL with storyboard media as a tool to enhance reading engagement and comprehension. To address this gap, the current study investigates the implementation of PBL with storyboard media in a senior high school setting, specifically targeting tenth-grade students' reading comprehension. Unlike previous research, this study:

1. Focuses on a senior high school context, where reading demands are higher and more complex.
2. Examines the impact of PBL on reading comprehension, rather than just vocabulary or speaking skills.
3. Utilizes storyboard media to enhance student engagement and comprehension, an approach not widely explored in past research.
4. Employ a quasi-experimental design with pretests and post-tests to provide robust empirical evidence of the intervention's effectiveness.

By addressing these research gaps, this study contributes valuable insights into the effectiveness of PBL in enhancing reading comprehension at the senior high school level. It also offers practical recommendations for teachers seeking innovative strategies to improve reading instruction in EFL classrooms.

To explore these issues, the study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there a significant improvement in the reading comprehension achievement of tenth-grade students at MAN 2 Palembang before and after being taught using the PBL strategy?
2. Is there a significant difference in reading comprehension achievement between tenth-grade students at MAN 2 Palembang who are taught using the PBL strategy and those who are not?

METHODOLOGY
Subject

Shukla (2020) defines the population as the group to which research conclusions apply, while Creswell (2012) describes a sample as a subset of this

population used for generalization. In this study, the population consisted of 295 tenth-grade students at Senior High School in Palembang. The researcher used purposive sampling, which involves intentionally selecting individuals based on specific criteria. Two out of ten classes were chosen based on shared characteristics: being taught by the same English teacher, having similar reading comprehension abilities, and a similar number of students. Class X.4 was the experimental group, and X.3 was the control group. This approach ensured purposeful representation in the study.

Design and Procedure

This study employed a quasi-experimental design, specifically a non-equivalent pre-test post-test control group design, as described by Creswell (2012). Unlike randomized controlled trials, quasi-experimental research does not involve random assignment of participants; instead, existing class groupings are used for both the experimental and control groups (Creswell, 2012). Randomization was not feasible due to the school's administrative structure, where students were pre-assigned to intact classes. Reassigning students for research purposes could have disrupted the learning environment and faced resistance from teachers and administrators. Thus, utilizing pre-existing class sections allowed the study to be conducted in a real classroom setting while maintaining the integrity of the school's instructional framework.

To ensure content validity, the test was reviewed by two experienced English teachers who assessed its alignment with the curriculum objectives and its ability to measure different levels of reading comprehension, including literal, inferential, and evaluative understanding. Following expert validation, the researcher conducted a trial of the instrument with an additional sample group—37 students from class X.7 at MAN 2 Palembang. The test, initially consisting of 75 questions, was administered in May and analyzed using SPSS 26. Validity was determined using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, comparing the significance value (r-output) of each question with the r-table value. A question was considered valid if its r-count exceeded the r-table value. The analysis revealed that only 50 questions met the validity criteria, leading to the removal of 25 items (questions 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 14, 16, 17, 18, 23, 27, 32, 33, 35, 38, 44, 46, 47, 49, 53, 55, 58, 70, and 75). The final assessment consisted solely of valid questions.

To assess the reliability of the test, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated using SPSS 26. The analysis yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.738, indicating that the instrument had acceptable internal consistency and could be considered reliable for measuring students' reading comprehension. By ensuring both validity and reliability, the study established that the test instrument accurately assessed students' reading comprehension abilities and provided a sound basis for evaluating the impact of the intervention.

According to Nunan (1992), this study delineates two essential variables: the independent variable and the dependent variable. The dependent variable is the element measured in the experiment, whereas the independent variable is influenced by the experiment. Essentially, changes in the independent variable induce corresponding changes in the dependent variable. Moreover, Creswell (2012) affirmed that the dependent variable is an aspect or quality contingent on or influenced by an independent variable. The characteristics of an independent variable

influence the outcome of the dependent variable. In the context of this study, Project-Based Learning serves as the independent variable, exerting an influence on the dependent variable, which is students' reading comprehension.

The researcher administered the Project-Based Learning strategy as a treatment to the experimental group. The treatments spanned 8 meetings, encompassing both the pretest and post-test sessions. Throughout this intervention, the researcher undertook the role of a teacher, conducting six treatments lasting 90 minutes each. In each session, the researcher employed similar tasks with different texts to facilitate students' comprehension. Explicit instructions are provided for exercises, offering a comprehensive overview that includes the concept, purpose, general structures, an example of a narrative text, and the application of PBL in the teaching and learning process. The aim is to ensure a thorough understanding among students. To foster collaborative learning, the students in the experimental group organized into five-member learning groups, considering a mix of gender and performance levels. Within these groups, students collaborated to ensure a collective understanding of the lessons imparted by the researcher. The culmination of the instructional period involved each student presenting a project created with the provided resources. This exercise serves a dual purpose: gauging students' background knowledge of narrative texts and illustrating how PBL can be effectively employed for reading comprehension. A detailed lesson plan will guide the teaching and learning process.

Table 1. Teaching procedure

Experimental	**Control**
Pre-Activities	Pre-Activities
1. The teacher initiates the session by welcoming and inviting students to pray together.	1. The teacher initiates the session by welcoming and inviting students to pray together.
2. The teacher inquires the students' well-being and takes attendance.	2. The teacher inquires the students' well-being and takes attendance
3. The teacher poses guiding questions related to the topic, such as, "Have you ever heard the legend of Malin Kundang?" The teacher articulates the learning objectives for the session.	3. The teacher poses guiding questions related to the topic, such as, "Have you ever heard the legend of Malin Kundang?" The teacher articulates the learning objectives for the session.
Main Activities- Demonstrating the Implementation of PBL	Main Activities
1. The teacher clearly explains narrative text (definition, generic structures, language features, types of narrative text).	1. The teacher elucidates the material to the students.
2. The teacher introduces the project to the students	2. The teacher directs the students to read and discuss the text pertinent to the material.
3. The teacher randomly divides the class into small groups of four to five students, each with designated leader groups.	3. The teacher provides guidance and allocates sufficient time for the students to engage in exercises.
4. The teacher provides	4. The teacher offers feedback to students on their tasks.

opportunities for students to ask questions related to the material/topic.
5. The teacher distributes learning materials that align with the narrative text.
6. The teacher explains to the students that they will have a project assignment, which involves creating a storyboard.
7. Setting the project timeline: The teacher and the students agree on the submission deadline for their project work, which will be in two weeks.
8. The teacher prompts students to draft the project, involving transforming brainstormed ideas into a preliminary layout, which serves as a foundation for further refinement.
9. The teacher guides students in actualizing the project, inquiring about the progress and asking how far it has been realized.
10. Culminating in the presentation: The teacher selects a random group to present about the project, with each group allotted 15 minutes for their presentation.
11. Evaluation: The teacher provides feedback about the project.

Post-Activities	Post-Activities
1. The teacher monitors and guides the students' activities during their discussions, providing assistance when they face difficulties.	1. The teacher monitors and guides the students' activities during their discussions, providing assistance when they face difficulties.
2. The teacher directs students to record the outcomes of their discussions.	2. The teacher directs students to record the outcomes of their discussions.
3. The teacher concludes the activity by having students summarize the material and share their learnings with the rest of the class.	3. The teacher concludes the activity by having students summarize the material and share their learnings with the rest of the class.
4. The teacher and students conclude the lesson by praying together.	4. The teacher and students conclude the lesson by praying together.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

In this research, a test was used as the primary instrument for data collection. As Brown (2004) explains, a test is a tool to measure an individual's abilities, knowledge, or performance in a specific area. This study utilized both pre-tests and post-tests. The test development process involved several steps: (1) preparing the test, (2) obtaining expert validation for its appropriateness, (3) conducting a trial, (4) analyzing the results for validity and reliability, (5) finalizing the test, and (6) administering it. The test content was gathered from various reliable online resources.

The collected data were analyzed to determine the most effective strategy for teaching reading comprehension and to assess whether the experimental group outperformed the control group in reading comprehension among tenth-grade students at a senior high school in Palembang. A quasi-experimental design with pretest and post-test assessments was employed, and the data were analyzed statistically using the t-test method in SPSS 26. The analysis involved several steps: descriptive statistics, prerequisite analysis (including normality and homogeneity tests), and hypothesis testing. These steps were designed to provide a thorough understanding of the data, ensuring statistical validity and reliability in drawing conclusions about the effectiveness of the teaching strategy and the differences in performance between the experimental and control groups.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this research encompass prerequisite analysis and the results of hypothesis testing.

Pre-requisite Analysis

In the prerequisite analysis, two tests were conducted: a normality test and a homogeneity test.

Normality Test

For the normality test, the researcher used the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test in SPSS Version 26. This test was applied to assess the normality of the pretest and posttest scores for both the control and experimental groups.

Students' Pretest Scores in Experimental and Control Groups

The normality test was conducted using SPSS Version 26. The results of the analysis are presented in the table below:

Table 2. The Result of normality test of students' pretest scores in experimental and control groups

No	Students' Pretest	N	Sig.(2-tailed)	Result
1	Experimental Group	32	0.055	Normal
2	Control Group	32	0.161	Normal

Based on the table analysis above, the significance (2-tailed) values for the students' pretest scores were 0.055 for the experimental group and 0.161 for the control group. Since both values are higher than 0.05, it can be concluded that the pretest data for both groups were normally distributed.

Students' Post-test Scores in Experimental and Control Groups

Normality test was conducted using SPSS Version 26. The results of the analysis can be seen in the table below:

Table 3. The result of normality test of students' post-test scores in experimental and control groups

No	Students' Pretest	N	Sig.(2-tailed)	Result
1	Experimental Group	32	0.200	Normal
2	Control Group	32	0.151	Normal

Based on the table analysis above, the significance (2-tailed) values for the students' post-test scores were 0.200 for the experimental group and 0.151 for the control group. Since both values are greater than 0.05, it can be concluded that the post-test data for both groups are normally distributed.

Homogeneity Test

To measure homogeneity, the Levene statistic was used. The Levene statistic assesses the equality of variances across different groups. This test was applied to evaluate the pretest scores of students in both the experimental and control groups, as well as the post-test scores for both groups.

Students' Pretest Scores in Experimental and Control Groups

The homogeneity test was conducted using SPSS Version 26. The results of the analysis are shown in the table below:

Table 4. The result of homogeneity test of students' pretest scores in experimental and control groups

No	Students' Pretest	N	Sig.(2-tailed)	Result
1	Experimental Group	32		
2	Control Group	32	0.275	Homogenous

The significant (2-tailed) value for the pretest scores of students in both groups was 0.275, as indicated by the table analysis above. Since this value is greater than 0.05, it can be concluded that the pretest results for both groups are homogeneous.

Students' Post-test Scores in Experimental and Control Groups

The homogeneity test was conducted using SPSS Version 26. The results of the analysis are shown in the table below:

Table 5. The result of homogeneity test of students' post-test scores in experimental and control groups

No	Students' Posttest	N	Sig.(2-tailed)	Result
1	Experimental Group	32		
2	Control Group	32	0.196	Homogenous

According to the table analysis above, the significance (2-tailed) value for the post-test scores of students in both the experimental and control groups was 0.196. Since this value exceeds 0.05, it can be concluded that the post-test data for both groups are homogeneous.

The Result of Hypothesis Testing
This research used a paired sample t-test to determine whether the improvement in tenth-grade students' reading achievement was statistically significant after being taught using Project-Based Learning (PBL). Additionally, an independent sample t-test was employed to assess whether there was a significant difference in reading achievement between the experimental and control groups.

The Significance Level of PBL's Effect in Experimental Group
This research employed a paired sample t-test to evaluate the significant improvement in tenth-grade students' reading achievement following instruction through Project-Based Learning (PBL). The results of the paired sample t-test are presented in the table below:

Table 6. The result of paired sample T-Test

By Using PBL	Paired Sample T-test			H0	Hα
	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)		
	-22.272	31	0.000	Rejected	Accepted

Based on the table analysis, the p-value was 0.000 with df=31 and t=22.272. Since the p-value is lower than 0.05 and the t-value is greater than the critical value from the t-table (2.037), the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (Hα) is accepted. This demonstrates a significant improvement in the students' scores from the pre-test to the post-test in the experimental group taught using PBL, thereby answering the first research question.

The Level of Difference of PBL's Effect between Experimental and Control Group
In this research, an independent sample t-test was used to assess the significant difference in reading achievement between tenth-grade students who were taught using Project-Based Learning (PBL) and those who were not. The results of the independent sample t-test are presented in the table below:

Table 7. The result of independent sample T-Test

Group	Mean	t	df	Sig.(2 tailed)	H0	Hα
Experimental	76.44	4.855	62	0.000	Rejected	Accepted
Control	61.06					

Based on the table analysis, the p-value was 0.000 with df=62 and t=4.855. Since the p-value is lower than 0.05 and the t-value exceeds the critical value from

the t-table (1.708), the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (Hα) is accepted. This indicates there is a significant difference in reading achievement between students taught using Project-Based Learning (PBL) and those who were not, thus addressing the second research question.

Discussion

Based on the findings presented in the previous section, the following interpretations were made. Prior to conducting this research, the researcher observed tenth-grade students at MAN 2 Palembang and interviewed an English teacher. It was discovered that the students faced challenges in learning English, particularly in reading. Consequently, the researcher was interested in exploring how effective Project-Based Learning (PBL), using storyboards as a medium, could be in improving students' reading comprehension achievement.

The study revealed that the pretest and posttest results for students in both the experimental and control groups were homogeneous and normally distributed. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was conducted to assess normality, and the results indicated that the pretest and posttest scores of both groups were normally distributed, as the significance values were greater than 0.05. Additionally, Levene's test was used to evaluate the homogeneity of the sample data for the pretest and posttest scores between the experimental and control groups. The results showed that the scores were homogeneous, with significance values above 0.05. Consequently, it can be concluded that the students' abilities in both groups were equivalent.

The results of the independent sample t-test revealed a significant difference between the post-test scores of the experimental group, which was taught using Project-Based Learning (PBL) with storyboards, and the control group, which was taught using the teacher's routine strategy. This difference was observed among the tenth-grade students at Senior High School in Palembang.

Based on the data analysis, there was a significant difference in students' reading comprehension achievement between those taught using Project-Based Learning (PBL) with storyboards and those who were not. This significant difference is reflected in the mean post-test scores: the experimental group scored 76.44, which was higher than the control group's score of 61.06. Although both groups showed improvement after six meetings, the experimental group demonstrated a more significant increase in scores compared to the control group. This finding is consistent with the results of the study by Ariani (2023).

Moreover, the results of the paired sample t-test demonstrated a significant improvement in students' scores from the pretest to the posttest for both the experimental and control groups. The t-value was 22.272, indicating that the mean post-test score was significantly higher than the mean pretest score. Specifically, the experimental group's post-test score increased by 33.75 points, while the control group's post-test score increased by 9.56 points. This shows that the improvement in the experimental group was more substantial than in the control group. The effectiveness of Project-Based Learning (PBL) with storyboards for tenth-grade students at MAN 2 Palembang is thus confirmed. This finding aligns with the results of studies by Agustiawati (2022), Ariani (2023), and Helsanita (2014).

As described previously, the treatment for the experimental group involved 8 sessions using storyboards as the instructional media, including pretests and posttests. According to Smeda et al. (2012), the teaching steps in this process

included: preparing the classroom, brainstorming, introducing the project, creating groups, drafting the storyboard, searching for relevant materials, actualizing the storyboard, and conducting presentations and evaluations. The project required students to work in pairs to create a storyboard based on a given topic. During the first and second meetings, students initially experienced confusion with the PBL directions and the use of storyboard media. To address this, the researcher provided additional explanations and demonstrations on implementing PBL and creating storyboards. By the third meeting, students began to understand the stages of PBL and successfully created storyboards based on the assigned topics. The students reported that PBL fostered greater activity and collaboration in the classroom. This finding aligns with Arends (2012), who argued that Project-Based Learning helps students solve problems, engage in critical thinking, and build confidence. The findings of the present study indicated that PBL effectively enabled students to critically evaluate perspectives based on discussion topics through group interactions, as also argued by Aliyu et al. (2020).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the findings and interpretations presented in the previous chapter, several conclusions can be drawn. First, it was found that there was a significant difference in reading comprehension achievement between the tenth-grade students at MAN 2 Palembang who were taught using Project-Based Learning (PBL) with storyboards and those who were not. The table analysis revealed that the p-value was 0.000, which is lower than the significance level of 0.05, indicating a significant difference between the two groups. As, the descriptive statistics showed although the mean scores of both groups improved, the improvement in the experimental group was more substantial than that of the control group.

Second, there was a significant improvement in the reading comprehension achievement of the tenth-grade students at Senior High School in Palembang who were taught using PBL with storyboards. The table analysis revealed a p-value of 0.000, which is below the significance level of 0.05, and a t-value of 4.855, which exceeds the critical t-value of 1.515. These results indicate that teaching reading through PBL with storyboards was highly effective, leading not only to improved reading comprehension but also fostering creativity, active participation, and collaboration in the classroom.

Based on the findings, the researcher offers several suggestions for improving EFL teaching and learning. First, English teachers should integrate Project-Based Learning (PBL) into the curriculum to promote critical thinking and collaboration. Additionally, storyboard media can be used to make reading activities more interactive. Regular professional development programs for teachers should focus on innovative teaching strategies, including PBL and multimedia resources. The curriculum should also be aligned with 21st-century skills, fostering student-centered learning approach, and incorporating performance-based assessments. Finally, future research should explore the long-term effects of PBL on reading comprehension and language proficiency. Regarding English teachers, it is important to consider using Project-Based Learning (PBL) with storyboards when teaching reading. Utilizing PBL with storyboards can enhance the English teaching and learning process by making lessons more interactive and engaging.

For students, it is recommended that they build confidence in expressing ideas and reading more broadly. Utilizing Project-Based Learning (PBL) and storyboards can help encourage frequent reading of diverse texts.

For future researchers, it is recommended to consider the findings of this study and use them as a reference for further investigation into the same topic. Future studies could explore the use of Project-Based Learning (PBL) with storyboards while accounting for various variables and conditions to achieve a more comprehensive understanding.

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