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# SCROL Strategy and Reading Comprehension Achievement: A Quasi-Experimental Study of Seventh-Grade Students in Indonesia

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study investigates the effect of the SCROL (Survey, Connect, Read, Outline, Look Back) strategy on the reading comprehension achievement of seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Tanjung Batu, Ogan Ilir, Indonesia. Many junior high school EFL students in Indonesian contexts continue to struggle with identifying main ideas, interpreting supporting details, and engaging independently with written texts challenges inadequately addressed by the Project-Based Learning (PBL) approach currently mandated under the Merdeka curriculum. This study aimed to determine whether SCROL instruction significantly improved students' reading comprehension and whether a significant between-group difference existed compared to conventional instruction. A quasi-experimental non-equivalent control group design was employed with 60 seventh-grade students (experimental: n=30; control: n=30). Data were collected through validated and reliable multiple-choice reading comprehension pre-tests and post-tests. Paired samples t-tests confirmed significant within-group improvement in the experimental group ($t = -28.016$, $p = 0.000$), and independent samples t-tests confirmed a significant between-group difference in post-test scores ($t = 11.600$, $p = 0.000$). These findings demonstrate that the SCROL strategy is an effective, structured instructional approach for junior high school EFL learners. English teachers are encouraged to integrate SCROL explicitly into reading instruction, particularly in contexts where students lack strategic comprehension frameworks.*



## 1. Introduction

Reading is widely recognized as one of the most fundamental skills in English language learning and a critical gateway to academic achievement. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, reading enables learners to access disciplinary knowledge, process complex information, and develop higher-order cognitive capabilities. Grabe and Stoller (2019) describe reading as a major source of academic input that equips learners with the capacity to understand, interpret, and engage with written information across school subjects. This perspective is reinforced by Koda (2018), who positions reading at the center of learners' cognitive development, facilitating the integration of new ideas and the construction of deeper understanding. Perfetti and Stafura (2014) further argue that proficient reading supports the

formation of coherent mental representations of texts, directly underpinning students' comprehension and overall learning performance. More recently, Kim (2020) identified strong reading skills as key predictors of academic achievement, particularly for learners who must process complex content across educational settings. Collectively, these perspectives affirm that improving reading abilities is not merely a linguistic goal but an academic imperative with far-reaching consequences for students' educational trajectories.

Despite its recognized importance, reading comprehension remains one of the most persistently challenging skills for EFL learners, particularly in Indonesian secondary school contexts. Ahmed and Bidin (2020) document that EFL learners frequently struggle with restricted vocabulary knowledge, unfamiliar text structures, and insufficient strategy repertoires all of which impede comprehension development. In the Indonesian context, Yuliani and Fitriani (2023) found that inadequate reading practice and ineffective instructional approaches significantly undermine secondary school students' reading performance. These challenges are not isolated but reflect systemic gaps in reading pedagogy that leave students without the strategic tools necessary for independent text processing, inferential reasoning, and self-regulated comprehension monitoring. When students lack structured strategies for engaging with texts, they become dependent on teacher mediation rather than developing the autonomous comprehension capacities required for sustained academic success.

At SMP Negeri 2 Tanjung Batu, Ogan Ilir, preliminary teacher interviews confirmed that seventh-grade students faced significant reading comprehension difficulties, including challenges in identifying main ideas, recognizing topic sentences, understanding text structure and purpose, and locating specific details. The school's reading instruction was primarily delivered through Project-Based Learning (PBL), as mandated by the national Merdeka curriculum. While PBL offers meaningful learning through collaborative, project-driven tasks, its application without explicit reading strategy instruction creates a critical instructional gap. Sagita (2023) argues that PBL becomes less effective in fostering reading strategies when self-regulation components are absent, noting that its emphasis on student-led projects does not equip learners with the metacognitive mechanisms required to monitor comprehension breakdowns or independently resolve textual ambiguities. Without targeted strategy instruction, students may fail to recognize when comprehension has broken down and may lack the tools to repair understanding a limitation with direct consequences for their academic performance.

Research has consistently demonstrated that explicit, strategy-based reading instruction represents a powerful solution to comprehension difficulties, particularly when strategies are systematically aligned with learners' characteristics and instructional needs (Chamot & O'Malley, 2018; Paris et al., 2015). The SCROL strategy is an acronym for Survey, Connect, Read, Outline, and Look Back was developed by Grant (1993) as a structured, multi-phase approach to reading comprehension instruction. SCROL systematically guides learners through five sequential phases that engage them before, during, and after reading: the Survey phase prompts students to preview headings, images, and key terms; the Connect phase activates prior knowledge through targeted discussion; the Read phase supports careful, section-by-section engagement with the text; the Outline phase requires students to organize main ideas and supporting details hierarchically; and the Look Back phase promotes self-evaluation and comprehension verification. This structured sequence transforms passive readers into active, strategic processors of textual information (Girsang & Silalahi, 2020).

Empirical research on SCROL has yielded consistently positive results across educational levels and text types. At the junior high school level, studies involving eighth-grade students have demonstrated significant comprehension improvements following SCROL instruction

across narrative, descriptive, and expository texts (Purnamasari, 2018; Sustrayani, 2021; Miranti, 2017; Lestari, 2021; Rahmawati, 2019; Siregar, 2020). At the senior high school level, studies with tenth- and eleventh-grade students have similarly demonstrated SCROL's effectiveness with hortatory exposition, descriptive, narrative, and report texts (Ibrahim, 2020; Sari, 2022; Hasibuan, 2023; Putri, 2019). These studies collectively constitute the state of the art in SCROL research, establishing the strategy as empirically supported across a range of EFL classroom contexts.

Despite this growing body of evidence, a conspicuous research gap remains. All existing SCROL studies have concentrated on eighth-grade junior high school or tenth- and eleventh-grade senior high school populations. Seventh-grade students is a critical transitional population entering junior high school with diverse and often underdeveloped literacy backgrounds have been entirely absent from the SCROL research literature. This omission is educationally significant: early secondary school represents a formative period for the development of strategic reading habits, and targeted intervention at this stage may yield lasting benefits for students' academic trajectories. The urgency of addressing this gap is further amplified by the documented comprehension difficulties at SMPN 2 Tanjung Batu, where PBL-based instruction has not adequately addressed students' strategy deficits. The novelty of the present study lies in its targeted application of SCROL to seventh-grade EFL learners previously unexamined population within an Indonesian junior high school operating under the Merdeka curriculum.

The present study is guided by two research objectives. The first is to determine whether the SCROL strategy produces a significant improvement in reading comprehension achievement among seventh-grade students at SMPN 2 Tanjung Batu. The second is to determine whether a significant difference exists in reading comprehension achievement between students taught using SCROL and those taught through conventional methods. These objectives are operationalized through two corresponding research questions: (1) Was there any significant improvement in the reading comprehension achievement of seventh-grade students at SMPN 2 Tanjung Batu after being taught using the SCROL strategy? (2) Was there any significant difference in reading comprehension achievement between seventh-grade students taught using the SCROL strategy and those taught through conventional methods? By addressing these questions, the study aims to contribute both empirical evidence and practical guidance for EFL reading instruction at the junior high school level in Indonesia.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative quasi-experimental research design, specifically a non-equivalent control group design with pre-test and post-test measurements. This design is appropriate when random assignment of participants to conditions is not practically feasible due to intact classroom structures (Creswell, 2020). Both the experimental and control groups completed a pre-test prior to the intervention period and a post-test following its conclusion. The experimental group received reading instruction using the SCROL strategy across ten treatment sessions, while the control group continued with conventional reading instruction. By comparing within-group pre/post changes and between-group post-test differences, this design enables systematic evaluation of SCROL's instructional effect on reading comprehension achievement.

### 2.2 Population and Sample

The study was conducted at SMP Negeri 2 Tanjung Batu, Ogan Ilir, South Sumatra, Indonesia a nationally accredited (Grade A) state junior high school implementing the

Merdeka curriculum with English as a compulsory subject. The population comprised all 116 seventh-grade students enrolled across four classes during the 2026/2027 academic year. Convenience sampling was employed based on the recommendation of the school's English teacher, who identified Classes VII.2 and VII.3 as having comparable class sizes and similar average English scores. The final sample consisted of 60 students: 30 in Class VII.2 (experimental group) and 30 in Class VII.3 (control group).

### 2.3 Research Instrument and Validity

The primary data collection instrument was a multiple-choice reading comprehension test, developed by the researcher and used as both the pre-test and post-test. The initial instrument comprised 60 items based on ten reading texts five descriptive and five procedure texts with six items per text distributed across four comprehension skill categories: scanning for specific details (two items), identifying the paragraph topic (one item), identifying the main idea (two items), and guessing word meanings from context (one item). This distribution reflects the reading comprehension competencies specified in the seventh-grade Merdeka curriculum learning objectives.

Content validity was established through review by two experienced English lecturer-validators who confirmed alignment between test items, curriculum standards, and intended learning outcomes. Construct validity was assessed through a try-out administered to 30 seventh-grade students at SMPN 44 Palembang using the Product Moment Correlation formula in SPSS version 25 (r-table = 0.361 at $\alpha = 0.05$, $n = 30$). Of the original 60 items, 10 were identified as invalid (r-count < r-table) and removed. The final instrument comprised 44 valid items drawn from eight texts. Reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.907 well above the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.70 indicating strong internal consistency. Readability of the texts was verified using the Flesch-Kincaid Reading Ease calculator; scores ranged from 62 to 87 across the test passages, consistent with the seventh-grade textbook range of 61 to 87 and confirming age-appropriate difficulty levels.

### 3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection proceeded across three phases. In the first phase, both groups completed the pre-test under standardized, supervised conditions within their respective classrooms (60-minute time allocation) to establish baseline reading comprehension levels. In the second phase, the experimental group participated in ten treatment sessions of SCROL-based reading instruction (each comprising 2 × 45-minute periods) addressing descriptive and procedure texts aligned with the seventh-grade curriculum. Each session followed a structured three-stage format: pre-activity (text surveying and background knowledge activation), whilst-activity (connecting prior knowledge, active reading, and outlining key information), and post-activity (reviewing comprehension and discussing strategy application). The control group received equivalent instructional time using conventional reading methods without explicit strategy instruction. In the third phase, both groups completed the post-test under conditions identical to the pre-test.

### 3.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 25 across three sequential stages. First, descriptive statistics (N, minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation) were computed for pre-test and post-test scores of both groups. Second, prerequisite assumption tests were performed: the Shapiro-Wilk test assessed normality of score distributions (appropriate for $n < 50$; significance criterion: $p > 0.05$), and Levene's test evaluated homogeneity of variances

between groups (significance criterion: $p > 0.05$). Third, hypothesis testing was conducted at $\alpha = 0.05$ using two procedures: a paired samples t-test compared the experimental group's pre-test and post-test scores to assess within-group improvement, and an independent samples t-test compared post-test scores between the experimental and control groups to assess between-group differences in reading comprehension achievement.

## 3. Findings

### 3.1 Descriptive Statistics: Experimental Group Pre-Test and Post-Test

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for the experimental group's pre-test and post-test scores. Following SCROL instruction, the group's mean score increased from 66.89 (SD = 5.29) to 81.36 (SD = 4.32), representing a gain of approximately 14.5 points. The narrowing standard deviation further indicates that scores became more consistent after the intervention, suggesting that SCROL instruction produced more uniform comprehension development across the group.

**Table 1**. **Descriptive Statistics of Experimental Group Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores**

| Test | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pre-Test | 30 | 56.82 | 77.27 | 66.89 | 5.29 |
| Post-Test | 30 | 72.73 | 88.64 | 81.36 | 4.32 |

### 3.2 Descriptive Statistics: Post-Test Comparison between Groups

Table 2 compares the post-test descriptive statistics of the experimental and control groups. The control group achieved a post-test mean of 73.46 (SD = 4.03), while the experimental group achieved a substantially higher mean of 81.36 (SD = 4.32), a difference of approximately 7.9 points. This between-group gap provides initial evidence that SCROL-based instruction produced greater comprehension gains than conventional methods over the same instructional period.

**Table 2**: **Descriptive Statistics of Post-Test Scores: Experimental vs. Control Group**

| Group | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Control | 30 | 65.91 | 81.82 | 73.46 | 4.03 |
| Experimental | 30 | 72.73 | 88.64 | 81.36 | 4.32 |

### 3.3 Weak governance intensifies the harmful effects of profit-seeking

Table 3 presents the Shapiro-Wilk normality test results. All significance values exceeded 0.05 (pre-test experimental: $p = 0.643$; post-test experimental: $p = 0.309$; post-test control: $p = 0.574$), confirming normally distributed score distributions for all groups and test occasions. Table 4 presents Levene's homogeneity test results. Significance values also exceeded 0.05 across all comparison types (within-group: $p = 0.255$; between-group: $p = 0.676$), confirming equality of variances. Both parametric test assumptions were satisfied, validating the use of *t*-tests for hypothesis testing.

**Table 3**. **Shapiro-Wilk Normality Test Results**

| Test | Statistic | df | Sig. (p) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pre-test (Experimental) | 0.974 | 30 | 0.643 |
| Post-test (Experimental) | 0.960 | 30 | 0.309 |

| Test | Statistic | df | Sig. (p) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Post-test (Control) | 0.972 | 30 | 0.574 |

*Note. $p > .05$ indicates normal distribution.*

**Table 4. Levene's Test for Homogeneity of Variances**

| Comparison | Levene Statistic | df1 | df2 | Sig. (p) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Within-group (Experimental Pre/Post) | 1.322 | 1 | 58 | 0.255 |
| Between-group (Post-test Exp. vs. Control) | 0.177 | 1 | 58 | 0.676 |

*Note. $p > .05$ confirms homogeneity of variances.*

## 3.4 Hypothesis Testing

Table 5 presents the paired samples t-test results comparing the experimental group's pre-test and post-test scores. The analysis yielded $t(29) = -28.016$, $p = 0.000$, confirming a statistically significant improvement in reading comprehension within the experimental group after SCROL instruction. The null hypothesis (H01) was rejected: SCROL strategy instruction produced a significant improvement in seventh-grade students' reading comprehension achievement (Ha1 accepted).

**Table 5. Paired Samples T-Test: Pre-Test vs. Post-Test (Experimental Group)**

| Pair | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pre-Test – Post-Test (Experimental) | -28.016 | 29 | 0.000 |

*Note. Significant at $p < .05$.*

Table 6 presents the independent samples t-test results comparing post-test scores of the experimental and control groups. The analysis yielded $t(58) = 11.600$, $p = 0.000$ for both equal and unequal variance assumptions, confirming a statistically significant difference between groups. The null hypothesis (H02) was rejected: students taught using the SCROL strategy demonstrated significantly higher reading comprehension achievement than those taught through conventional methods (Ha2 accepted).

**Table 6. Independent Samples T-Test: Post-Test Experimental vs. Control Group**

| Assumption | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Equal variances assumed | 11.600 | 58 | 0.000 | Reject H0 |
| Equal variances not assumed | 11.600 | 58 | 0.000 | Reject H0 |

*Note. Significant at $p < .05$.*

## 4. Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that the SCROL strategy significantly enhanced the reading comprehension achievement of seventh-grade students at SMPN 2 Tanjung Batu, Ogan Ilir both in terms of within-group pre/post improvement and between-group post-test differences. These outcomes contribute both confirmatory and novel evidence to the existing literature on SCROL-based reading instruction in EFL contexts.

Prior research had established SCROL as an effective reading instructional strategy, predominantly among eighth-grade junior high school students and tenth- or eleventh-grade senior high school students across a range of text types including narrative, descriptive, hortatory exposition, and report texts (Purnamasari, 2018; Sustrayani, 2021; Ibrahim, 2020; Sari, 2022; Hasibuan, 2023). What was previously known, therefore, was that SCROL's structured metacognitive scaffolding produces comprehension gains in older secondary students across diverse text genres. What was not previously known and what this study newly establishes is that SCROL's effectiveness extends to seventh-grade learners, a population at a critical but understudied transitional stage of secondary literacy development. The statistically significant outcomes across both hypothesis tests ($p$ = 0.000) demonstrate that seventh-grade students are not only developmentally capable of implementing the five SCROL phases but benefit substantially from this structured approach. This finding closes a meaningful gap in the applied linguistics and EFL pedagogy literature and provides a new empirical benchmark for SCROL research with younger secondary populations.

The mechanism underlying SCROL's effectiveness in this study can be understood through its systematic activation of metacognitive processes. The Survey phase establishes a text schema before reading begins, reducing cognitive load during text engagement. The Connect phase links new textual information to existing background knowledge, facilitating deeper encoding. The Read phase transforms passive consumption into active, section-by-section processing. The Outline phase requires students to construct hierarchical summaries, strengthening the distinction between main ideas and supporting details. Finally, the Look Back phase cultivates self-monitoring a metacognitive practice consistently associated with improved comprehension repair and accuracy (Wahyuni et al., 2023). Together, these phases address multiple dimensions of comprehension simultaneously in a manner that conventional instruction, which typically emphasizes text exposure without explicit metacognitive scaffolding, does not provide. This is consistent with Manik's (2024) finding that explicit metacognitive strategy instruction produces measurable EFL reading comprehension gains, and with Sari's (2022) observation that structured strategies like SCROL significantly improve students' ability to synthesize textual information.

The implications of these findings are significant for multiple stakeholder groups. For English teachers working at the junior high school level particularly in schools implementing the Merdeka curriculum SCROL offers a research-validated instructional tool that is compatible with the curriculum's student-centered, active-learning philosophy. While PBL remains a mandated instructional approach, the findings of this study suggest that PBL's effectiveness in supporting reading comprehension is limited without the complement of explicit strategy instruction. Teachers are advised to integrate SCROL phases systematically into their reading lesson structures, paying particular attention to facilitating the Connect and Outline stages, which appear to generate the most substantive comprehension gains by helping students organize and retain textual information. Pre-service teacher education programs and in-service professional development initiatives should include explicit training on SCROL implementation to equip teachers with the pedagogical competencies needed to deliver strategy-based reading instruction with fidelity.

For educational administrators and curriculum designers at the school and district level, the findings highlight the importance of institutionalizing reading strategy instruction within junior high school English curricula rather than treating it as an optional supplement. The flexibility provided by the Merdeka curriculum creates space for integrating structured reading strategy frameworks alongside project-based learning activities. Policy guidance that formally encourages or requires explicit strategy-based reading instruction particularly at the seventh-grade level, where students are making the critical transition to more demanding

secondary literacy tasks would support more equitable and systematic comprehension development across Indonesian EFL classrooms.

With respect to the generalization of these findings, several important caveats apply. The study was conducted at a single school in Ogan Ilir, South Sumatra, with a sample of 60 participants selected through convenience rather than random sampling. While the quasi-experimental design and statistical rigor of the hypothesis tests strengthen internal validity, the generalizability of the findings to other schools, districts, or student populations must be approached with care. Schools with different socioeconomic profiles, teacher competency levels, curriculum implementations, or student language backgrounds may yield different outcomes. Additionally, the study measured short-term reading comprehension gains across approximately ten instructional sessions; the extent to which SCROL instruction produces sustained, long-term benefits for reading development remains an open empirical question. Future research employing larger, more diverse samples, randomized controlled designs where ethically and practically feasible, extended intervention periods, and longitudinal follow-up measures would substantially strengthen the evidence base for SCROL as a systemic reading intervention in Indonesian EFL secondary education.

## 6. Conclusion

This study examined the effect of the SCROL strategy on the reading comprehension achievement of seventh-grade students at SMPN 2 Tanjung Batu, Ogan Ilir, through a quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test non-equivalent control group design involving 60 participants. The findings consistently demonstrate that SCROL instruction produced statistically significant improvements in the experimental group's reading comprehension and that experimental group students significantly outperformed control group peers on post-test scores. These outcomes establish SCROL as an effective instructional strategy for seventh-grade EFL learners a population that had not previously been the subject of SCROL research and extend the existing evidence base for strategy-based reading instruction in Indonesian secondary EFL contexts.

The study makes a dual contribution. Theoretically, it fills a gap in the SCROL literature by demonstrating the strategy's applicability and effectiveness with seventh-grade learners and reinforces the broader argument for explicit, structured metacognitive strategy instruction in EFL reading pedagogy. Practically, it equips English teachers and school administrators in Indonesian junior high school contexts with evidence-based justification for integrating SCROL into reading instruction, particularly as a complement to the project-based learning approaches mandated by the Merdeka curriculum.

Future research should explore SCROL's effectiveness across a wider range of school settings, grade levels, and text types, and investigate its potential synergies with digital and multimodal reading environments. Longitudinal studies examining the sustained effects of SCROL instruction on students' reading development over extended periods would further enrich understanding of how structured strategy training shapes long-term literacy outcomes in EFL contexts. Researchers are also encouraged to explore mixed-methods designs that capture not only achievement outcomes but also students' perceptions, metacognitive awareness, and motivation following SCROL instruction.

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