



UTILIZING REAP STRATEGY (READ-ENCODE-ANNOTATE-PONDER) TO ENHANCE LEARNERS' READING COMPREHENSION ACROSS VARIED READING HABITS

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article info

Article history:

Received: 14 November 2024

Accepted: 10 December 2024

Available online: 22 December 2024

Keywords:

Reading

REAP strategy

Reading habits

Non-fiction

Perception

abstract

This study investigates the impact of the REAP (Read, Encode, Annotate, Ponder) strategy on students' reading comprehension across different reading habits. The research was conducted with 10 second-semester students from the English Language Education program at FKIP UNISKI Kayuagung. This study applied a quantitative method with a pre-experimental design. Three instruments such as a reading habits questionnaire, a reading comprehension test, and a questionnaire of perception were employed to collect the data. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, t-tests, and descriptive analysis. The REAP strategy significantly improves the participants' reading achievement, especially for students who read often and those who seldom read. In the first stage, students are lectured while listening and reading, encoding to rephrase ideas, annotating notions, and finally, group discussions to reinforce comprehension. These steps help develop comprehension for all the students regardless of the type of reading they engage in. Additionally, students' perceptions of the REAP strategy varied, with those possessing strong reading habits responding more positively. More specifically, there was a great symbiosis between REAP and students reading in the high-reading-habit group; great skill and motivation are 'polished up' as students adjust to navigation with REAP. Contrarily, low-reading-habit students move on with the structural and supportive frameworks offered, though not at a fast pace. In addition, the students with better reading skills also show better outcomes for the REAP strategy, indicating that it corresponds to their skills. In contrast, the students with lower reading skills also benefit from the strategy almost as much. The REAP strategy is a versatile and valuable instrument to increase reading and promote active reading at each differentiated reading level.

INTRODUCTION

Reading is a critical skill that underpins academic success and lifelong learning. As Mirza et al. (2021) state reading is an active part of life that is not just about pleasure when needed. Effective reading, however, goes beyond mere word recognition; it entails comprehension, critical thinking, and the interpretation and analysis of information. According to Indriani (2019), reading is an active process that involves thinking critically, evaluating, and comprehending written texts. This complexity underscores the necessity for strategies that enhance students' reading comprehension skills. Reading is an attempt to comprehend the writer's message (Rosli et al., 2018). It is a gateway to all other information, which may lead to understanding the world outside the text (Alnahdi & Aftab, 2020). Additionally, Asmara and Sartika (2020) point out that students must develop strong comprehension abilities to

effectively absorb information from fiction and non-fiction texts written in English. Mastering reading comprehension is key to unlocking broader academic success and deeper engagement with written material.

Despite the importance of reading for EFL learners, many students encounter difficulties. They often struggle with ambiguous vocabulary and unfamiliar context, which impedes their understanding (Qrquez & Ab Rashid, 2017). Additionally, a lack of background knowledge can make it challenging for students to comprehend texts, as they fail to utilize prior knowledge effectively (Khanam et al., 2014). To sum up, limited vocabulary, unfamiliar contexts, and insufficient background knowledge all contribute to EFL learners' reading difficulties.

To help students encounter their difficulties in reading, teachers can use one reading strategy which is REAP. The REAP (Read, Encode, Annotate, and Ponder) strategy is deeply rooted in constructivist learning theory, emphasizing active student engagement in constructing meaning from texts. According to Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, strategies like REAP encourage collaborative learning and scaffolded support, allowing students to engage with texts more effectively. This is especially true in EFL contexts since learners may need scaffolded methods to gain understanding and criticality. The REAP strategy proposed by Eanet and Manzo (1976) aims to enhance students' interaction with texts by promoting their readerly reading activities actively and critically. Students can memorize the language structures, learn language peculiarities and language skills through meaningful interaction with the text, and intelligently comprehend the writers' role for better reading. The strategy consists of four key phases: while and after the text reading, comprehension of the text might include covering the content by reading it several times to grasp what is being said, subsuming the text by outlining essential concepts and ideas so that they are easily retrievable, noting personal comments on the text as a way of interacting with the text, and, lastly, reflecting on the significance and import of the content to enhance comprehension and critical evaluation. These structured steps make REAP an effective tool for improving comprehension and fostering active engagement with texts, especially in EFL contexts.

The REAP strategy assists students in understanding a reading text by guiding them to revisit the text and concentrate on the REAP chart. It helps them extract key points from the text and enables them to stay more focused while reading enhancing their comprehension of the text's content (Wulandari et al., 2014). The REAP, a comprehensive strategy, promotes a deeper and more meaningful understanding of texts. By integrating these phases, the REAP strategy helps students break down complex texts into manageable parts, facilitating better comprehension and retention (Manzo et al., 2002). In short, the REAP strategy is effective in enhancing students' reading comprehension by guiding them through a structured process that promotes deeper engagement and better retention of the text's content.

The REAP strategy aids in enhancing students' understanding of the text by discerning the author's intentions, encompassing the information presented within the text. Ultimately, students showcase their comprehension by paraphrasing the ideas using other terms. Consequently, this approach proves highly advantageous in the teaching and learning process, fostering student learning (Dewi et al., 2019). In summary, the REAP effectively enhances learner's comprehension by assisting them to understand and express the author's ideas in their own words, making it a valuable tool for enhancing learning outcomes.

Recent research has further highlighted the efficacy of the REAP strategy in EFL contexts. For instance, Sholeh and Osu (2021) found that the REAP strategy significantly improved comprehension and vocabulary retention in EFL learners, as it encouraged active engagement with texts and self-monitoring of understanding. Similarly, Hasriani et al (2023) report notable increases in reading comprehension test scores among EFL students, particularly when applied

to the analytical exposition and narrative texts. These findings demonstrate that REAP supports the development of critical reading skills that are vital for EFL learners to process complex texts.

Additionally, Kurnia et al (2024) emphasize that the REAP strategy not only enhances comprehension but also fosters students' metacognitive awareness by teaching them to plan, monitor, and evaluate their reading processes. This aligns with recent trends in EFL education, which prioritize learner autonomy and the ability to apply cognitive strategies independently. Furthermore, Siregar et al. (2023) highlighted the interactive nature of the REAP strategy in EFL classrooms, where it facilitates peer collaboration and discussion, creating a dynamic and motivating learning environment.

Recent studies also underline the strategy's adaptability to digital and hybrid learning environments, a critical consideration in modern education. Putra et al. (2023) demonstrated the effectiveness of REAP when integrated with digital tools, such as annotation software and online collaborative platforms, which enhanced student engagement and comprehension in virtual EFL classrooms. This adaptability ensures the strategy remains relevant in diverse educational contexts.

In summary, the REAP strategy continues to be a highly effective tool for enhancing reading comprehension and critical thinking in EFL learners. Its theoretical foundation in constructivism and sociocultural theory, combined with recent empirical support, underscores its relevance in fostering active engagement, metacognitive awareness, and adaptability to modern learning contexts. Further exploration of its applications, particularly in digital and collaborative settings, could offer even more opportunities to optimize its use in EFL education.

Eanet and Manzo (1976) mention the four steps of REAP activities. First, in the Read phase, students focus on understanding the main idea of the text by reading carefully to grasp the author's key points. Second, in the Encode phase, students rephrase or summarize the author's ideas using other words. Third, Annotate phase, students engage with the text by adding their thoughts, questions, and reactions. It allows them to make personal connections or analyze the author's arguments. Fourth, in the Ponder phase, students reflect on the text and their annotations, either through discussion or written reflection. This helps them develop critical thinking skills and connect the material to broader ideas or real-life situations. By following the REAP steps, students move from understanding the text to engaging in deeper analysis and critical thinking, fostering independence as readers.

The reader's reading habits are of significant importance to the success of not only the selected REAP strategy but any strategy in general. Reading habits significantly enhance literacy skills in students, particularly when supported by parents and teachers, fostering critical thinking and knowledge acquisition (Faizah, 2024). Additionally, Wijayanti, Mujiyanto, and Pratama (2022) define readability as being divided according to the time, the kind, and the reason for reading, and all the parameters have a significant impact on the efficiency of students' reading comprehension. For instance, the REAP strategy complies with the deliberate reading tuition, for example, annotation of academic texts or reflected "contemplation of critical concepts, which leads to a better understanding of the content being read. However, bear in mind that reading habits change with age based on Owusu-Aceaw (2014), who suggests that "there is a close relationship between" changes in reading habits and the performance levels". His study operationalizes reading habits by measuring parameters such as frequency, diversity of reading materials (e.g., books, articles, or digital texts), and the degree of reflective engagement during reading (Wulandari et al., 2023). Therefore, encouraging students to establish the regular practice of reading contributes" to better comprehension and indirectly contributes to various behaviors that are at the heart of the REAP approach to studying,

especially to encode, annotate, and reflect critically. As Abid et al. (2020) argue there is a strong positive relationship between reading habits and academic achievement in English.

By exploring the impact of the REAP strategy on students' reading skills across various reading habits, this research aims to provide a holistic understanding of how to enhance academic performance. The integration of reading and personalized learning strategies like REAP can address the diverse needs of students, fostering both their comprehension and expression abilities. The research problems of this study are as follows.

- 1) Is there any significant difference in students' reading achievement before and after the treatment (REAP strategy) across the students' reading habits?
- 2) How is the student's perception of the use of the REAP strategy in learning reading?

The novelty of this research lies in its comprehensive approach to examining the REAP strategy's impact on reading skills across various reading habits. While previous studies have explored REAP's effectiveness in isolated contexts, this study aims to integrate these aspects to provide a holistic understanding. By addressing these gaps, the study contributes to the field of educational strategies and methodologies, particularly in language learning.

METHOD

A quantitative method using a pre-experimental research design was applied to conduct this research. Pre-experimental studies are practical and effective designs for assessing the immediate effects of interventions, mainly through the pre-test and post-test format. These studies allow a researcher to quantify changes in knowledge, attitudes, or skills over a specified time frame and are, therefore, helpful in disciplines such as education and health services (Stratton, 2019; Cowell, 2010). In addition, the pre-experimental designs help identify pre-test influence and modulations that can be compared with post-test results (Lewis, 1969).

The population of this research was the second-semester English Language Education Study Program at FKIP UNISKI Kayuagung in the academic year of 2023/2024. It consisted of one class, which took an Interpretive Reading class, consisting of 10 students. Since the total population was 10 students, the total sampling technique was applied, where the researchers used the whole population as the samples.

Three instruments were applied to collect the data. First, a close-ended reading habits questionnaire taken from Khalisa (2018), was handed out to measure the reading habits in the second semester of English Language Education study program. The total number of questions in the questionnaire is 20 questions and the questionnaire was given with a duration of 30 minutes. The reading habits questionnaire measures several aspects of students' reading behaviors using 20 specific questions. The reading habits measure several critical constructs related to students' reading behaviors, namely (1) frequency of reading; questions 4 and 5 used to help students become familiar with language, vocabulary, and sentence structures, making it easier to understand texts; (2) types of reading material; questions 6–10 used to improve their ability to comprehend diverse texts., (3) motivation and purpose; questions 2, 12–14 used to improve skills, alleviate boredom, or pursue a hobby, making them more engaged and motivated to put more significant effort into understanding what they read. (4) context of reading; questions 15–18 are used to determine the influences of focus and retention, which are essential for adequate comprehension. (5) barriers to reading; questions 19–20 used to help students approach reading with confidence and improve their ability to grasp the meaning of texts. Second, a written test of reading comprehension consists of 30 multiple-choice questions and it was given before and after the tests: a pre-test and a post-test. Third, a questionnaire to know students' perceptions of the use of the REAP strategy. It consists of five questions and it

effectively captures the cognitive (e.g., understanding and analysis) and affective (e.g., engagement and satisfaction) dimensions of students' perceptions of the REAP strategy.

To assess the validity of the instruments, both the content, face and construct validities of the questionnaire were evaluated. Based on experts' judgment, the questionnaires demonstrated strong content, face, and construct validity, indicating that each item accurately reflects key aspects of reading habits. Subsequently, the reading comprehension test was piloted, and its reliability was assessed using the Kuder-Richardson Formula 21 (KR-21). The results indicated that the test was reliable, yielding a KR 21 coefficient of 0.76. It exceeds the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70 for reliability. The test was also deemed valid, as the items were appropriately aligned with the intended reading comprehension skills.

The data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed using a Likert Scale. The scoring indicators for each item on the Likert scale questionnaire from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree (5-1). To assess students' reading habits, their replies were categorized based on the mean score. The students who got ≥ 68.6 were categorized high reading habits and those who got <68.6 were categorized as having low reading habits. To analyze the reading comprehension test, a t-test was employed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Pretest and Posttest Reading of High Reading Habits

The results of the pretest reading for high reading habits obtained the highest score of 70, the lowest score of 10, and an average score of 32, with a standard deviation of 24.89. Meanwhile, in the results of the posttest reading for high reading habits, the highest score was 100, the lowest score was 60, and the average score was 77, with a standard deviation of 14.83. The distribution of reading pretest and posttest scores for high reading habits can be seen in Figure 1.

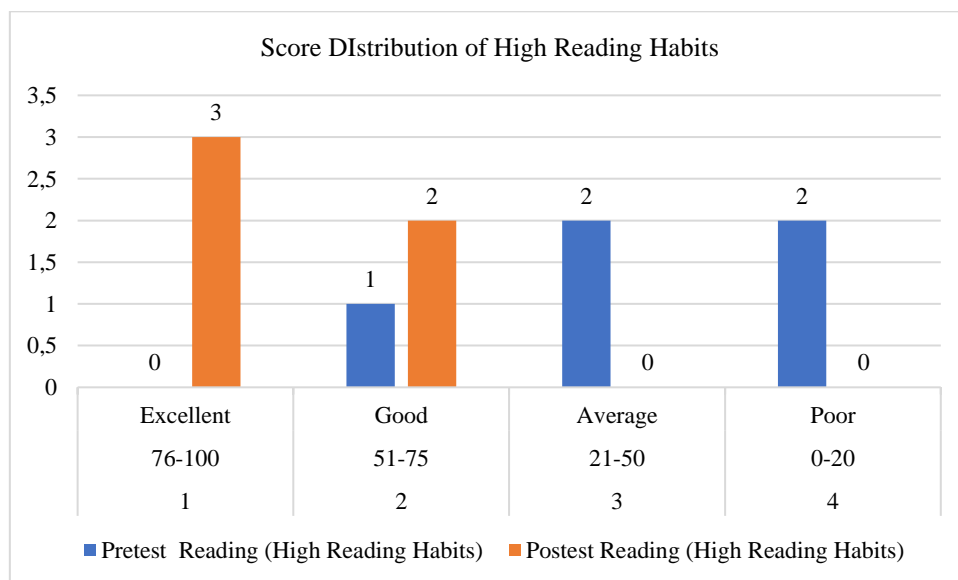


Figure 1. Score Distribution of Reading Pretest and Posttest of High Reading Habits

Figure 1 shows that in the reading pretest, no students were categorized as excellent, 1 student was classified as good, 2 students were categorized as average, and 2 students were categorized as poor. Meanwhile, in the reading posttest, 3 students were categorized as excellent, 2 as good, and no students as average and poor.

Pretest and Posttest Reading of Low Reading Habits

The results of the pretest reading for low reading habits obtained the highest score of 40, the lowest score of 10, and an average score of 22 with a standard deviation of 10.95. Meanwhile, in the results of the post-test reading for low reading habits, the highest score was 85, the lowest score was 50, and the average score was 67 with a standard deviation of 13.03. The distribution of reading pretest and posttest scores for low reading habits can be seen in Figure 2.

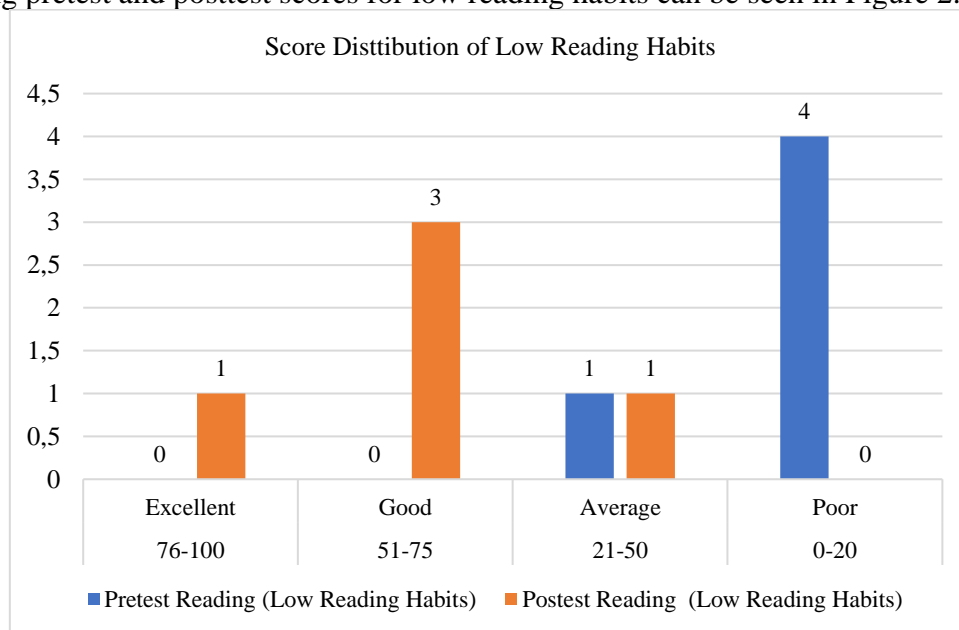


Figure 2. Score Distribution of Reading Pretest and Posttest for Low Reading Habits Students

Figure 2 shows that in the reading pretest, no students were categorized as excellent and good, 1 student was categorized as average, and 4 students were categorized as poor. Meanwhile, in the reading posttest, 1 student was categorized as excellent, 3 students were categorized as good, 1 student was categorized as average, and no students were categorized as poor.

Results of Paired Sample Test of Reading Pretest and Posttest of High and Low Reading Habits Students

The average score of students during the reading pretest was 32. After being given treatment, the average reading post-test score was 77. This shows a difference between the reading pretest and reading posttest of 45 at a significance of 0.001 with degrees of freedom (df) = 4. Since t-obtained (9.00) was higher than t-table (2.77), it indicates that there is a significant difference in reading achievement before and after the implementation of the REAP strategy for students with high reading habits.

Table 1. Paired Sample of Reading Posttest of High Reading Habits Students

	Paired Differences						t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
				Lower	Upper				
Posttest Reading_High ReadingHabits – PretestReading_High ReadingHabist	45.00	11.18	5.00	31.11	58.88	9.00	4	.001	

The reading pretest of low reading habits students was 22. After being given treatment, the average reading post-test score was 67. This shows a difference between the reading pretest and reading posttest of 45 at a significance of 0.003 with degrees of freedom (df) = 4. Since t-obtained (6.71) was higher than t-table (2.77), it indicates that there is a significant difference in reading achievement before and after students with low reading habits after the implementation of the REAP strategy.

Table 2. Paired Sample of Reading Posttest of Low Reading Habits Students

	Paired Differences						t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
				Lower	Upper				
Posttest Reading_Low ReadingHabits – PretestReading_Low ReadingHabist	45.00	15.00	6.71	26.37	63.63	6.71	4	.003	

The average post-test score for high reading habits students was 77, while the average post-test score for low reading habits students was 32. This shows a difference between the posts of the two groups of 45 at a significance of 0.008 with degrees of freedom (df) = 8. In other words, the REAP strategy is very effective in improving the reading skills of high reading habits students.

Table 3. The Independent Sample Test for Students with High and Low Reading Habits

Group	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	t	df	Sig
High Reading Habits	5	77	14.83	45	3.47	8	.008
Low Reading Habits	5	32	24.89				

The findings from the paired sample t-test reveal significant improvements in reading achievement for high and low-reading habit students after implementing the REAP strategy. These improvements, supported by statistical evidence, suggest that the REAP strategy can significantly enhance reading comprehension regardless of students' pre-existing reading habits. Students with high and low reading habits have better improvement in their reading skills because the REAP strategy provides a step-by-step approach. In the Reading phase, students first listen to a peer reading aloud, then read individually. This combination of hearing and seeing the text supports different learning styles. High-reading habit students refine their skills, while low-reading habit students gain confidence and focus in a group setting. In the

Encoding phase, students restate the sentences. This assists high-reading habit students process complex ideas, and it allows low-reading habit students to work through challenging words and concepts with peer support. This phase strengthens memory and understanding for both groups. In the Annotation phase, students underline and highlight important parts of the text. High-reading habit students break down difficult concepts, while low-reading habit students use the step-by-step approach to better understand the main ideas. In the Pondering phase, students reflect and discuss the text in groups. High-reading habit students sharpen their critical thinking, and low-reading habit students benefit from group discussions to clear confusion and solidify their understanding. This structured process helps all students, regardless of their reading habits, improve their comprehension and retention.

This result aligns with recent studies, which suggest that the REAP strategy can enhance students' reading abilities by fostering deeper engagement with the text through encoding and annotation processes. For instance, research by Zasrianita (2017) found that the REAP strategy significantly improved students' reading comprehension by encouraging active reading and cooperation. This is also consistent with findings from Jatmiko, Kurniawan, and Putri (2016), who observed a similar increase in reading comprehension when students used the REAP strategy in narrative texts. This finding is also corroborated by research conducted by Amalia et al (2018), which demonstrated a significant improvement in students' reading comprehension, particularly in students with lower baseline skills, after the REAP strategy was applied.

Both groups showed significant progress, but students with low reading habits displayed a larger mean difference, suggesting that they benefitted more dramatically from the REAP strategy. This supports the work of Elmansi (2023), who noted that REAP not only enhances reading comprehension but also fosters critical thinking, particularly benefiting students who may struggle with reading skills. Briefly, the REAP strategy helps enhance students' reading achievement for high and low reading habits students.

The Result of Student's Perception of the Use of REAP Strategy

The results of students' perception in Figure 3 show that students with high reading habits generally perceived the REAP strategy more positively. Most students with high reading habits "Strongly Agreed or "Agree" that the REAP strategy improved their reading comprehension, engagement, and analytical skills. Conversely, students with low reading habits showed more mixed reactions, with a few disagreeing or staying neutral on whether the strategy was beneficial.

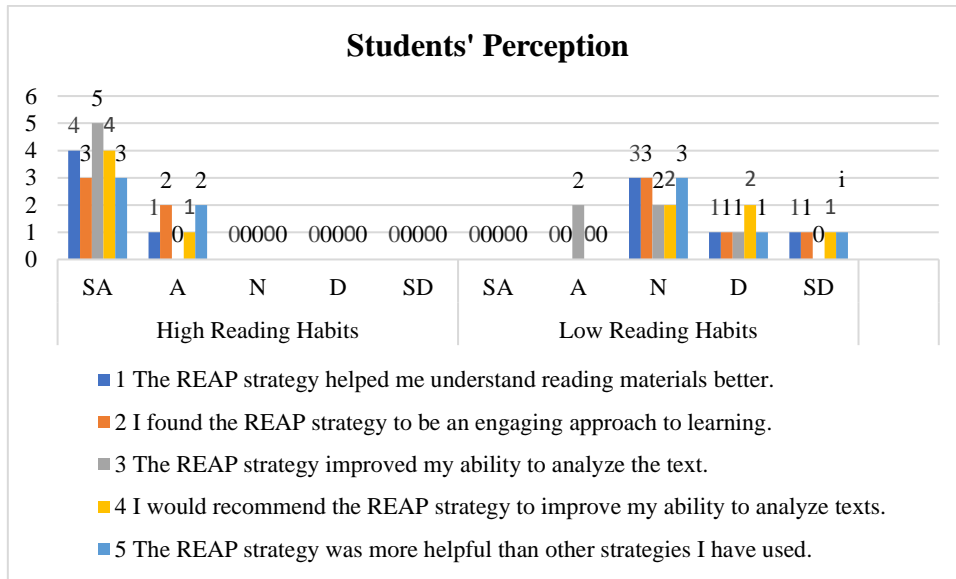


Figure 3. Students' Perception of High and Low Reading Habits

In terms of student perception, the study found that students with high reading habits responded more positively to the REAP strategy compared to those with low reading habits. Among students with high reading habits, most agreed or strongly agreed that the REAP strategy helped improve their comprehension, engagement, and ability to analyze the texts. Conversely, students with low reading habits had more varied responses, with some remaining neutral or disagreeing with the perceived benefits of the strategy.

Low-reading-habit students often struggle with the REAP framework due to a combination of motivational deficits, insufficient metacognitive strategies, and underdeveloped reading skills, all of which hinder their ability to engage with the strategy and improve their academic performance effectively. One of the most significant barriers for low-reading-habit students is a lack of intrinsic motivation. Students with low reading habits often exhibit diminished enthusiasm for reading tasks, a problem that can stem from an external locus of control and learned helplessness. This is supported by Walet (2011), who postulated that if students experience an external locus of control, it means that they will be helpless and, therefore, have no power that can enable them to determine their success at school. This perceived lack of agency diminishes their desire to continue with complex approaches such as the REAP that need people to engage fully. Research supports the strong connection between reading habits and learning motivation. Ayuningtiyas and Nabila (2024) found a significant correlation between the two, showing that students with consistent reading routines are more likely to exhibit higher levels of learning motivation. In contrast, unmotivated learners are less likely to recognize the value of reading as a tool for personal and academic growth, leading to disengagement and poor performance (Wani & Ismail, 2024). This absence of intrinsic motivation creates a vicious cycle, where disengagement reduces exposure to reading practices, further reinforcing negative attitudes toward reading.

Additionally, deficits in foundational reading skills exacerbate the difficulties low-reading habits students face. Cunningham and Stanovich (1998) note that "students with low reading frequency often show deficits in vocabulary and comprehension, which hinder their ability to engage with advanced reading strategies like REAP." The REAP framework, which relies on encoding and analyzing complex texts, can be particularly challenging for these students, as

they may lack the necessary vocabulary and comprehension skills to process and annotate effectively.

Students' attitudes towards the REAP strategy significantly differ between students with high and low reading profiles. High readers suggested overwhelmingly positive perceptions about the strategy due to the congruency of the strategy with their already developed reading abilities and metamonitoring capability. Wigfield and Guthrie (2000) explain, "Students with strong reading habits exhibit higher intrinsic motivation and cognitive engagement, enabling them to benefit more from structured and reflective strategies like REAP." The framework, annotation, and pondering of successful students familiar with these advanced reading strategies can engage thoroughly with the REAP framework and improve their understanding and analytic abilities. Anderson (1996) also points out that "the more often readers turn to read, the more their stores of words and background knowledge will be drawn upon in comprehending the text." These factors make the REAP strategy particularly effective for high-reading-habit students, who can maximize its benefits through their existing skills.

However, these results support established literature claiming that metacognitive strategies are valued more by either skilled or interested readers. According to Pressley and Afflerbach (2015), proficient readers interact purposefully by comprehensively interacting with texts for reading purposes, comprehending, and reflecting on strategy using summarizing analysis parts of the REAP strategy. Regarding this alignment, students with high reading habits appreciate the REAP strategy as the right tool to augment their learning processes. Also, Supriyantini (2017) proves that the REAP strategy positively influences students' results and has a positive impact, thus affirming its effectiveness exclusively for skilled readers ready to analyze information critically.

In contrast, students with low reading habits had more mixed perceptions of the REAP strategy, though it still proved beneficial in certain areas. These students may initially need help to engage with the strategy because it demands a higher level of self-regulation and motivation. Afflerbach (2018) highlights that "students with less-developed reading habits often find metacognitive strategies challenging due to their lack of familiarity with reflective and self-regulated learning practices." Although there were some challenges, the REAP strategy—reading, encoding, annotating, and pondering—assisted students in actively engaging with texts, working collaboratively to process challenging content, and reflecting on their learning.

To sum up, the REAP strategy significantly improves reading achievement for high- and low-reading-habit students. High-reading-habit students benefit from aligning REAP with their existing skills and motivation. In contrast, low-reading-habit students gain from the structure and scaffolding it provides, even if their progress may be more gradual. Overall, the REAP strategy is perceived as an effective tool for improving comprehension and fostering active engagement across different levels of reading proficiency.

CONCLUSION

The REAP strategy significantly improves students' reading achievement across high and low-reading habits groups. While students with high reading habits benefit from refining their comprehension skills, students with low reading habits show greater overall improvement. It was because the strategy compensates for their weaker initial skills. These results are consistent with existing research on active reading strategies, which suggests that structured approaches like REAP can effectively enhance reading comprehension for students across different proficiency levels. The REAP provides an effective framework for academic success and

lifelong learning in the context of EFL. The strategy's ability to promote deeper engagement and critical analysis of texts highlights its value as a teaching tool in reading instruction.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the Foundation of Pendidikan Islam Bende Seguguk Kayuagung and Universitas Islam Ogan Komering Ilir Kayuagung for their financial support in making this research.

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