

THE EFFECT OF PEER-ASSISTED LEARNING STRATEGY IN READING COMPREHENSION

¹Riki Ainul Yakin, ²I Made Permadi Utama, ³Tri Setianingsih

¹English Language Education Faculty of Culture Management And Business
Mandalika University of Education

²English Language Education Faculty of Culture Management And Business
Mandalika University of Education

³English Language Education Faculty of Culture Management And Business
Mandalika University of Education

Corresponding Author Email: rrik03255@gmail.com

ABSTRACTS	ARTICLE INFO
<p>This study investigates the effect of the Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy on students' reading comprehension at MA Manba'ul Ulum Kabul in the academic year 2025/2026. The research employed a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design using a non-equivalent control group design. The sample consisted of 30 eleventh-grade students divided into an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group was taught using the Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy, while the control group was taught using a guided reading strategy. The data were collected through pre-test and post-test instruments consisting of 25 multiple-choice questions. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, normality test, homogeneity test, and independent samples t-test. The results showed that the post-test mean score of the experimental group (76.9) was higher than that of the control group (72.3). The independent samples t-test revealed a significant difference between the two groups ($t = 3.420$, $p = 0.002 < 0.05$). Therefore, it can be concluded that Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy has a significant positive effect on students' reading comprehension.</p>	<p>Article History: <i>Received: 3rd April 2026</i> <i>Revised: 21st April 2026</i> <i>Published: April 2026</i></p> <p>Keywords: <i>Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy, Reading Comprehension.</i></p>

INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is an essential skill in language learning that enables students to understand, interpret, and analyze written texts. It is not merely the process of decoding words but involves constructing meaning through interaction between the reader and the text. According to Hermanudin, Suhartono, Suryadi, & Noermanzah. (2019) Reading comprehension is an activity by reconstructing the reader's knowledge which directs the reader to critically interpret and analyze every part of the text so as to get an understanding of the actual reading content. The main problem underlying this research is the low reading comprehension ability among students. This situation was evidenced by classroom observations and preliminary assessment results, which revealed that students struggled to identify main ideas and summarize texts critically. This condition indicates that the learning approach used so far has not been fully effective in developing students' reading skills optimally. Therefore, there is a need to implement more effective learning strategies and actively involve students in the learning process.

Based on the problem above, Peer-assisted learning can be a strategy to solve those problems. Peer-assisted learning strategies involve students with higher abilities helping their peers who are having difficulty understanding the learning material. In the context of reading comprehension, this strategy can be implemented through various activities such as paired reading, reciprocal teaching, and cooperative learning groups. Through these activities, students gain the opportunity to discuss and negotiate the meaning of the reading text, ask and answer questions, and clarify difficult parts collaboratively. The PeerAssisted Learning Strategy, as explained by Lisan (2022), emphasizes learning through peer communication, allowing students to co-construct meaning in small groups. Likewise, Khotimah et al. (2024) confirmed that peer support enhances students' comprehension, as learners assist each other in interpreting texts and resolving misunderstandings.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study used a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental research design. The design employed was a non-equivalent control group design involving two groups: an experimental group and a control group. The population of this study consisted of 30 eleventh-grade students of MA Manba'ul Ulum Kabul in the academic year 2025/2026. The sample included two classes: one class (15 students) as the experimental group and another class (15 students) as the control group. The research instrument was a 25-item multiple-choice reading comprehension test administered as a pre-test and post-test. Each correct answer was scored 4 points, with a maximum score of 100. The experimental group received treatment using Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy for six meetings, while the control group was taught using guided reading strategy. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, normality test (Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk), homogeneity test (Levene's Test), and independent samples t-test using SPSS 16.0.

RESEARCH FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The descriptive statistics show that the mean score of the experimental group increased from 69.0 in the pre-test to 76.9 in the post-test, while the control group improved slightly from 68.0 to 72.3. This indicates that both groups experienced progress in reading comprehension, but the improvement in the experimental group was greater. The relatively higher mean score of the experimental group demonstrates that students who were taught using the Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy performed better in reading comprehension than those taught through guided reading strategy. Therefore, the descriptive data suggest that Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy has a positive effect on students' reading comprehension achievement.

This study was conducted to investigate the effect of the PeerAssisted Learning Strategy in students' reading comprehension at MA Manba'ul Ulum Kabul during the 2024/2025 academic year. The results of this study showed that the Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy had a significant effect in students' reading comprehension. Students who were taught through Peer-Assisted Learning achieved higher post-test scores compared to the control group that was taught using the guided reading strategy. This finding indicated that learning in pairs helped students collaboratively construct meaning, clarify text information, and support each other in understanding reading materials.

These results could be explained by the Social Interdependence Theory proposed by Johnson, Johnson, and Holubec (2013). According to this theory, the success of learning depends on the degree of positive interdependence among group members, where students perceive that their achievement is linked to the success of their peers. When students work cooperatively in pairs, as in the Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy, they develop a shared sense of responsibility

for each other's learning. This interdependence encourages them to engage in mutual assistance, exchange of ideas, and constructive feedback, all of which enhance comprehension.

In the context of reading comprehension, this theory suggests that peer interaction allows students to monitor each other's understanding, discuss difficult vocabulary, and co-construct meaning through dialogue. Johnson and Johnson (2019) explained that positive interdependence creates a supportive environment where learners feel motivated to help their peers succeed, leading to deeper understanding and improved performance. This is consistent with the observation that students in the Peer-Assisted Learning group were more active and engaged during reading activities compared to those in the control group.

The findings of this study were also consistent with several previous studies. Fuchs and Fuchs (2005) demonstrated that Peer-Assisted Learning enhances reading comprehension by promoting active engagement and cooperation. Topping (2017) found that peer tutoring improves students' confidence and encourages critical thinking during reading discussions. Similarly, Gillies (2016) emphasized that cooperative structures based on interdependence enhance students' cognitive processing and comprehension. Furthermore, Ardiansyah (2021) reported that students taught through Peer-Assisted Learning achieved significantly higher reading scores than those taught using traditional methods, confirming the positive effect of peer collaboration. These findings strongly aligned with the Social Interdependence framework, which highlights that mutual support and shared responsibility strengthen learning outcomes.

Moreover, the findings revealed that Peer-Assisted Learning created a more supportive and interactive learning environment. Students felt more comfortable sharing opinions and clarifying ideas with peers rather than speaking in front of the whole class. This atmosphere reduced anxiety and increased engagement, which are essential for successful reading comprehension. This observation supported Johnson and Johnson's (2019) view that positive interdependence promotes social skills, confidence, and active participation in academic tasks.

However, this study had certain limitations. The duration of the Peer-Assisted Learning implementation was relatively short, which might not have captured the long-term effects of the strategy in reading development. In addition, students with very low reading ability required additional support beyond what peer tutors could provide. Therefore, future research should consider extending the duration of Peer-Assisted Learning or combining it with teacher scaffolding or digital peerassistance tools to maximize the benefits.

In conclusion, the findings confirmed that the Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy was effective in improving students' reading comprehension. Supported by Social Interdependence Theory (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 2013), it could be inferred that positive peer relationships and mutual responsibility contributed to deeper understanding and enhanced reading performance. Peer collaboration provided meaningful academic and emotional support, which strengthened both comprehension and learner confidence. Development provided an interactive and scaffolded learning experience that promoted both academic achievement and learner confidence.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy has a significant positive effect on students' reading comprehension at MA Manba'ul Ulum Kabul. The experimental group achieved higher post-test scores compared to the control group. The statistical analysis confirmed a significant difference ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, Peer-Assisted Learning Strategy is effective in improving students' reading comprehension skills.

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