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TAKING AND MAKING NOTES FOR KNOWLEDGE: ELEVATING JUNIOR HIGH STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION

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ABSTRACT

Reading comprehension remains a persistent challenge for many EFL learners, especially at the junior high school level, where students often struggle to actively engage with texts. This study, however, examined the effectiveness of the Taking and Making Notes (TMN) technique in improving reading comprehension in these situations. This study used a quantitative quasi-experimental design with 64 eighth-grade students at SMPN 1 Palu involving two parallel classes. The experimental class was taught using the TMN technique, while the control class was taught using the conventional method. Data were obtained through pre- and post-tests, consisting of 20 multiple-choice questions and essays. SPSS version 31 was used to conduct statistical analysis, including descriptive statistics, normality and homogeneity tests, Independent and Paired Samples t-tests. The results showed that the experimental class achieved a significant increase in the mean score from 49.06 during the pre-test to 80.78 during the post-test; meanwhile, the control class's score only increased from 53.75 to 66.56. By increasing students' active engagement, improving retention, and enhancing their thinking skills, the independent samples t-test showed a statistically significant difference between the two groups ($p < 0.05$), indicating that TMN can be a useful method for improving students' reading comprehension.

Keywords: EFL Teaching, Reading comprehension, TMN technique

INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is a vital life skill for academic success and allows students to interact with and understand the world of knowledge. Students acquire a wealth of information through reading, which enhances their comprehension and critical thinking skills (Grabe & Stoller, 2019). Therefore, reading is considered not only a school subject; it is also considered a vital life skill for success, both academically and non-academically.

Reading is becoming increasingly important in learning English as a foreign language (EFL) because it provides students with the opportunity to interact with the target language and grasp meanings deeper than mere literal comprehension (Zhambylkyzy & Molotovskaya, 2021). Well-designed reading texts can demonstrate authentic language use, enrich vocabulary, and improve students' writing skills (Nation & Macalister, 2021).

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Therefore, teachers must provide reading lessons that are relevant, meaningful, and supported by appropriate teaching approaches.

Reading learning is greatly influenced by high-quality teaching materials and strategies. Students can gain an understanding of cultural elements, native language, and idiomatic expressions through good reading materials, which is useful for improving their language skills (Alamri, 2025; Salame et al., 2024). However, conventional teaching approaches that only present text without interaction often reduce students' motivation to learn and make them less engaged (Almaagbh, 2020). This can lead to student boredom and negatively impact their academic achievement (Al-Amri, 2025). Therefore, interactive learning strategies that encourage active participation are crucial.

According to experts, reading is an active process that creates meaning. Duke & Cartwright (2021) considers reading as a process of guessing, verifying, and refining hypotheses. Thus, Juan et al (2023) state that successful readers use cognitive and metacognitive strategies to comprehend texts. However, many students struggle to use these strategies because they are not accustomed to using them (Khellab et al., 2022). A study conducted in Indonesia showed that students in that country have low metacognitive awareness, meaning they are more likely to passively engage with complex texts (Mustopa et al., 2024). Similar findings were made in other situations where understanding results were adversely impacted by students' restricted usage of strategies (Meyer et al., 2024; Voyer et al., 2022). Junior high school students, in particular, still experience difficulties in finding main ideas, inferring implicit meanings, and connecting reading to academic contexts (Tawali, 2021).

Various strategies are used to improve reading comprehension, one of which is the technique Taking and Making Notes (TMN). TMN technique helps students rewrite information in their own words, making it easier to understand and remember the reading content (Bakri et al., 2022; Fausia et al., 2021; Rusdiansyah, 2019; Siswanto, 2019). Recent research also confirms that TMN technique is effective in improving comprehension and critical thinking (Linh & Kien, 2025; Pahrizal et al., 2025; Seo, 2025).

However, other studies have shown that some note-taking methods have no significant effect on reading comprehension. Leonard et al (2021)and Xu et al (2024) found that note-taking highlighted in paper texts had no significant effect compared to the no-note condition. Supporting factors such as review activities determine their effectiveness; the benefits of note-taking are limited in the absence of review (Jin & Webb, 2025). Furthermore, Li & Yan (2024) stated that differences between note-taking and print reading media did not affect students' comprehension outcomes.

Based on these diverse findings, previous research still places more emphasis on taking notes rather than making notes. Studies on the TMN technique in EFL contexts, particularly at the junior high school level, are still limited. Most previous studies focused on high school or college students (Khan et al., 2021; Permana et al., 2019; Syahputra & Inayah, 2022) and only assessed final outcomes without examining metacognitive processes. Furthermore, low metacognitive engagement and critical thinking skills among Indonesian students remain a major problem (Ruslin et al., 2022). Therefore, quasi-experimental research to test the effectiveness of TMN technique at the junior high school level is needed to fill this gap.

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Initial observations in July 2025 at SMP Negeri 1 Palu confirmed this problem. The majority of eighth-grade students had not yet mastered essential reading techniques. They often copied text directly without finding the main idea or rewriting it in their own words. According to Hüseyin (2019), low strategic engagement prevents students from systematically identifying, summarizing, and recording important information. As a result, their reading comprehension is limited.

Based on the results of initial observations and literature review, the research problem is formulated as follows: Is the TMN technique effective in improving the reading comprehension of eighth-grade students of SMPN 1 Palu? Therefore, this research aims to examine whether the use of TMN technique to improve reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students at SMPN 1 Palu. This research is expected to provide theoretical contributions and practical benefits also to provide new insight into the use of TMN technique in teaching reading comprehension.

METHODS

Quantitative research refers to scientific theories that are tested by examining relationships between measurable variables. Research instruments are used to assess them, and statistical techniques are used to analyze the results (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

In language education research, quasi-experimental designs are highly recommended because they can determine how effective a learning intervention is in the field (Adeoye, 2023). In line with this framework, the present study applied a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design to explore the effectiveness of the TMN technique in improving reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students at SMPN 1 Palu.

The design was employed to ascertain whether there was a distinction between the experimental class, which received instruction using the TMN technique, and the control class, which was taught through conventional methods. The quasi-experimental design was selected because the participants could not be randomly assigned to groups.

The population of this study comprised all eighth-grade students of SMPN 1 Palu, with a total of 351 learners. The sampling technique applied was purposive sampling, as two classes were deemed the most appropriate to meet the research objectives. These classes were identified as having relatively lower learning abilities compared to the others. Consequently, class VIII D, consisting of 32 students, was designated as the experimental group, while class VIII E, with 32 students, served as the control group.

The data collection was carried out using tests aimed at measuring students' learning outcomes within the cognitive domain. The instrument included 20 multiple-choice and essay questions, was administered in two stages: a pre-test and a post-test. These tests were used to evaluate students' reading comprehension in both the experimental and control groups, before the application and after the application of the treatment.

The test items were piloted with a group of students from a different class at the same school and examined by two English education specialists to guarantee the instrument's validity. Changes were made in response to expert input and the outcomes of pilot tests. Cronbach's alpha was then used to assess the instrument's reliability; the result was a

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coefficient of 0.82, suggesting that the test had high internal consistency and was appropriate for use in research.

The data obtained from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed with SPSS version 31 for Windows in several stages: descriptive statistics to describe and summarize the data (mean, minimum, maximum and standard deviation) before further analysis. A normality test and a homogeneity test are used as an absolute requirement before conducting the T-test. The T-test is used to determine whether a difference between the means of two samples is significant. According to Pallant (2020), many educational experimental studies recommend the T-test to measure the difference in means between two groups. The T-table and T-calculated values are compared at a significance level of 0.05 to make a decision. The researcher used T-test statistics or T-count, which were compared with the T-table to examine the effectiveness of TMN technique aimed at improving the reading comprehension of eighth graders.

Ethical principles such as scientific integrity, confidentiality, anonymity, and "confirmation of information" were used in conducting this research (Kozinets & Gretzel, 2024; Zhang et al., 2024). Permission was obtained from the school, and written consent from parents and students was obtained. Furthermore, this research adhered to the Research Integrity Policy Statement of Datokarama Islamic University, Palu, which sets high standards for research integrity (KTI, 2021).

The principles of trustworthiness and methodological triangulation helped maintain data authenticity (Mirza, 2023). Researcher committed to maintaining accurate data, preventing manipulation, and obscuring participant identities. After verification, sensitive documents were discarded to ensure compliance with international ethical standards.

RESULTS

The findings of data derived from a quasi-experimental study concerning the effectiveness of the TMN technique to improve reading comprehension of the eighth-grade students at SMPN 1 Palu as are presented in the following way. This research applied a quasi-experimental design; one experimental group was taught using the TMN technique, and the other control group was taught through the conventional method. This study consisted of two main variables: TMN technique (X) as the independent variable and students' reading comprehension (Y) as the dependent variable. The instrument was a test comprising 20 multiple-choice and essay items. The collected data were processed and analyzed using SPSS software 31 to provide a clearer depiction of the research results. The descriptive statistics of the pre-test and post-test outcomes are presented in the following table, which summarizes the data and the analysis conducted in relation to the research problem.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of Pre-Test and Post-Test

Class	Test	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Std. deviation
Control	Pre test	53.75	25	80	14.591
Control	Post test	66.56	40	95	15.629
Experiment	Pre test	49.06	20	75	13.164
Experiment	Post test	80.78	55	100	13.566

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Descriptive statistics serve to present and summarize the data. They are primarily concerned with outlining the characteristics of the sample. Referring to the table, the mean score of the experimental group demonstrated a considerable increase, rising from a poor level (49.06) to a good level (80.78) after the treatment. On the other hand, the control group experienced only a modest improvement, increasing from a fair level (53.75) to still within the fair level (65.56). Additionally, effect sizes were calculated for clarity. Cohen's d value was 0.97, indicating a large category. This suggests that TMN technique can improve students' reading comprehension.

Testing Assumptions

Normality and homogeneity tests were performed before inferential testing. Normality Test: All data (pre-test and post-test for both groups) had significance values more than 0.05, according to the findings of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method. Therefore, the data were normally distributed. Homogeneity Test: The Levene's test revealed homogenous variances in the data, with a significance value of 0.400 (> 0.05).

After completing the descriptive analysis, the researcher continued with the normality test as the subsequent stage. The study involved a total sample of 64 students. Aslam (2024),explains how researcher should interpret the p-value results of normality tests and the ability to choose the level of significance according to the characteristics of the data. The results of the normality test are presented in the following table :

Table 2. Test of normality

	Kolmogorov Smirnov Class			
		Statistic	Df	Sig.
Result	Pretest (control)	.100	32	.200*
	Posttest (control)	.128	32	.199
	Pretest (experiment)	.122	32	.200*
	Posttest (experiment)	.133	32	.158

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Based on the normality test results shown in the table, the significance value of the control class pre-test was 0.200 and the post-test was 0.199, both of which are higher than 0.05. Meanwhile, the significance value of the experimental class pre-test was 0.122 and the post-test was 0.200, which are also greater than 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data from both the control and experimental classes are normally distributed.

To verify the reliability of the data, a homogeneity test was carried out to determine whether the variances were uniform across the groups. The analysis was performed using SPSS, the decision-making criteria in the homogeneity test were: if the significance value > 0.05, then the variance of two or more groups of population data can be said to be homogeneous (Emerson, 2022), and the findings are displayed in the table :

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Table 3. Homogeneity test

	Class	Levene Statistic	Df 1	Df2.	Sig.
Result	Based on Mean	.717	1	62	.400
	Based on Median	.696	1	62	.407
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.696	1	61.187	.407
	Based on trimmed mean	.716	1	62	.401

Based on the data, the significance value obtained from the mean is 0.400, which exceeds the threshold of 0.05. This result confirms that the data possess homogeneous variance.

Inferential Results

Since both the normality and homogeneity tests indicate that the variances are uniform and the data are normally distributed. A t-test for independent samples was performed to examine whether a significant difference exists between the experimental and control groups. To compare the means of two groups that are independent of each other, this test was chosen because it meets the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance (Muhammadpour & Khalili Sabet, 2024) . The results are presented in the following table:

Table 4. Independent Sample T-Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances				
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Result	Equal variances assumed	.717	.400	3.887	62	.001
	Equal variances not assumed			3.887	60.799	.001

Based on Levene's Test for Equality of Variances, the significance value was 0.400 > 0.05, indicating that the data have homogeneous variances. Therefore, the Independent Sample t-test was conducted under the assumption of equal variances. The significant value (Sig. 2-tailed) of the Independent Sample t-test result was 0.001 < 0.05, which means there is a statistically significant difference between the experimental class taught using the TMN technique and the control class taught with conventional methods.

After obtaining the results of the Independent Sample t-test comparing the two groups, a Paired Sample t-test was carried out to examine the presence of a significant difference between pre-test and post-test results within the experimental class.Hariyanti et al (2024), also stated this test is relevant because it compares two measurements from the same participant before and after treatment to evaluate the internal intervention effect (the

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Kolmogorov-Smirnov & Levene test has been met). The outcome of the Paired Sample T-test is presented in the table below:

Table 5. Paired sample T-test

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Dev	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Diference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pretest-Posttest	31.719	18.431	3.528	38.364	25.074	9.735	31	.001

Based on the Paired Sample t-test result, it is shown that the t-count value is 9.735 with a significance value (2-tailed) of 0.001. Since this value is lower than 0.05, H0 is rejected while Ha is accepted. This indicates that there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test results after the used of the TMN technique. In addition, the hypothesis testing is further supported by comparing the t-count with the t-table. At a significance level of 0.025 (derived from 0.05/2) with 34 degrees of freedom (df), the t-table value is 2.032. Because the t-count (9.735) is much higher than the t-table value (9.735 > 2.032), it confirms that H0 is rejected and Ha is accepted. In addition, the effect size was calculated to strengthen interpretation Cohen's d = 0.97, which indicates a large effect. This demonstrates that TMN technique has a substantial and significantly impact on improving students' reading comprehension.

DISCUSSION

This study shows that the TMN technique improves reading comprehension in eighth-grade students at SMPN 1 Palu. Students in the experimental class achieved significantly higher post-test scores than those in the control class, indicating that TMN technique is more effective than conventional learning approaches.

The results of this study align with numerous international studies that emphasize the benefits of active and interactive TMN technique. For example, Linh & Kien (2025) in Vietnam and Seo (2025) in South Korea reported that students' reading comprehension improved and they were more engaged in learning when using structured note-taking methods. Similarly, Voyer et al (2022) and Meyer et al (2024) demonstrated that generative strategies such as paraphrasing and reorganizing ideas can improve comprehension and long-term retention. Khellab et al (2022) found that metacognitive reading strategies had positive effects in the Middle East. Conversely, Juan et al (2023) found that training in cognitive and reflective strategies can improve reading ability. These consistent cross-contextual results enhance the effectiveness of TMN technique as a learning method.

Theoretically, this research supports the view of reading as a process active psycholinguistics (Duke & Cartwright, 2021), where readers form hypotheses, monitor, and construct meaning from text. TMN technique actualizes this theoretical perspective by engaging students in both cognitive processes (identifying and organizing information) and

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metacognitive processes (monitoring and reflecting on understanding). Pedagogically, the results of this study indicate that implementing TMN technique in EFL classrooms can create more interactive and engaging reading lessons, while simultaneously improving comprehension skills and encouraging students' independent learning.

However, this study has limitations. First, it was conducted in only one school (n = 64), so the results cannot be broadly generalized. Second, the study only measured short-term outcomes through a post-test, without assessing long-term retention. Third, the data used were solely quantitative, excluding qualitative data such as classroom dynamics or student perceptions. Therefore, future research could expand on the findings by collecting more qualitative data (Mirza, 2023).

Overall, this study has both theoretical and practical benefits. Theoretically, it strengthens the empirical evidence on the TMN technique for improving reading comprehension at the junior high school level, an area that is still rarely studied in the EFL context in Indonesia. Practically, this study offers an organized approach for teachers to improve students' reading skills by encouraging them to actively participate in TMN technique. Furthermore, these findings are relevant for others in EFL who struggle with passive reading habits. Therefore, TMN technique can be used as a pedagogical method to support students' academic success and independent learning.

CONCLUSION

This study showed that the TMN technique significantly improved students' reading comprehension, as indicated by higher post-test scores in the experimental class and the rejection of H0 in both t-tests. This method helped students find core concepts, summarize important information, and reorganize texts more effectively than conventional methods.

The results show that TMN technique can help students overcome passive reading habits by encouraging student-centered and active learning. Furthermore, TMN technique improves students' comprehension and critical thinking skills. Practically, teachers are encouraged to design more engaging and rewarding reading lessons with TMN technique. To enhance the benefits of TMN technique, further research should be conducted to test its effectiveness on other language skills, long-term memory, different educational levels, and broader learning contexts.

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