

## ASSESSING THE STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION USING MULTIPLE-CHOICE TEST AND CONFERENCE TECHNIQUE

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Article history:</b> Received: November 28, 2024 Revised: December 11, 2024 Accepted: December 16, 2024 Published: December 31, 2024</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Assessment Reading Comprehension Multiple Choice-Test Conference Technique</p>	<p>Reading comprehension involves the interaction of the reader, text, and context. Reading comprehension is important because enhances understanding of text and know the detail of the text. This research aimed to improve the student's comprehension in reading the text and as a medium for assessing English students' reading. The research was undertaken in Junior High School (SMP) N 6 Semarang. The research chose one class and the sample consisted of 34 students in 8C. The researchers used ex-post facto and this research used a quantitative method to measure how well they comprehend the text and assessed two tests to students. The first test was assessed multiple choice test and the second test was assessed conference technique. The data was collected by providing 25 questions using multiple choice test and giving a descriptive text using conference technique. The data analysis technique used ordinary scoring for multiple choice test and a rubric for conference technique. The researchers analyzed the collected data by using paired sample t-test. The result of two tests analysis showed that the value of Sig. (2-tailed) is <math>0.000 &lt; 0.005</math>, so it means that there is a significant difference reading comprehension when students assessed with different instruments, which is multiple choice test and conference technique and mean of multiple-choice test is 79.05 and mean of conference technique is 86.85, it can be concluded that mean of conference technique is higher than multiple choice, so there is difference between two tests. The last, the result of multiple-choice test and conference technique proved that these two tests have an improvement or significance in students' reading comprehension.</p> <p><i>This is an open access article under the <a href="#">CC BY-SA</a> license.</i></p> 
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### INTRODUCTION

English is the language that is studied the most globally (McKay, 2016). English, as a

foreign language is the most common method of communication for numerous people engaging in international interactions (Gunantar, 2016). Furthermore, to speak with foreigners to understand any topic, we use English to make any conversation easy and feel enjoy. English is always communicated in certain regions because it is the world's primary language (Sofyan, 2021). For Indonesians, the mastery of the English language presents considerable challenges in terms of comprehension such as: vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. Many Indonesian schools also have an alternative to using English as the main language of instruction (Sartika, 2019). Every Indonesian nation must be able to interact effectively with its people, naturally using Indonesian as the common language. In addition, Alrajafi and Lampung (2021) to dominate the competition of life, everyone is trying to give power to themselves with different skills and to bring ideas and achieve achievement, the communities need appropriate communication media and language in their environment to appreciate the others. English is essential language that can speak to other people and deliver ideas.

As the old-fashioned or historical position of the local languages, the Indonesian language is a common language in connecting the national people of Indonesia (Lie, 2017). In fact, a majority of people, especially fresh graduates, think of English as a means of expanding their job opportunities and getting a better life. Companies generally want people who can show their skills with a strong academic record and ability to communicate in English (Sari & Ed, 2014). Furthermore, it was believed that the globalization era required English as an absolute requirement. Without English, they say, Indonesians would fall behind and be unable to compete on an international scale. Therefore, a rising number of Indonesian schools from nursery school to college are trying to use English as their primary education and communication (Jayanti & Norahmi, 2015).

The results and perspectives of teaching and learning have been affected by the standards that exist between students and teachers during the learning process (Boy Jon et al., (2021). Academic results are mostly set by teachers and students in a school. Consequently, when teachers and students cooperate, all learning activities get done effectively. In fact, the extremely important part of handling the processes of teaching and learning is the teachers (Kaur, 2019). However, when teachers lack sufficient communication's skills, it becomes harder to achieve successful results, and students in Indonesia need a longer time to

nfereunderstand the learning process, which affects students' high standards of quality learning chances (König et al., 2016). Furthermore, Numerous students keep having difficulties in communicating their thoughts in English, even though having engaged in years of study, particularly in the topics of speaking and reading and usually involves students' ideas verbally and other skills like writing and listening (Mukminin et al., 2018).

Reading is one of English's four skills that are considered an interactive activity. Moreover, Torppa et al., (2021) analyzed information on 2,525 kids' reading habits from the age of 5 to the age of 15 and discovered that there was a general belief. Texts that can produced for reading are products of writers' processes that are cognitive, linguistic, and social, but writers also encourage and trigger those reactions in their readers. Reading improves our lives and gives us the skills we need to deal with the complexity of the world. According to Venezky et al., (2018), any definition of literacy must prioritize reading, and the other skills are secondary. Furthermore, reading is regarded as one of the most important abilities for students and learning achievement. The success of reading methods should not be taken for granted, as reading in different contexts may not always be the same technique and one approach to investigating this problem is testing their reading.

For several reasons, reading is the most important ability that every EFL (English as a Foreign Language) student should have (Pardede, 2017). Reading serves as a window of knowledge through which students get an infinite amount of necessary information. Furthermore, Allington and McGill-Franzen (2021) created a research proposal to give students from low-income families to choose their summer reading material after reports about the lack of literature in homes, schools, and communities. Students will learn a wide range of facts and get information through reading, including details about events from the past, present, and future that readers would not have known. Nobody has any idea how education could occur without any kind of text (handouts, articles, textbooks, modules, etc.). One of the main sources of knowledge, guidelines, and directions for learning in traditional education is text (Manalu, 2019). In addition, to activities like role-playing and discussion to encourage productive skills, teachers offer new lessons for the development of students' comprehension abilities. Moreover, the goal of literacy instruction is to address students' needs by helping instructors become flexible and adaptive in decision-making and interactions with students (Paige et al., 2021).

Talking more about reading will be related to reading comprehension. Reading comprehension represents a multiple challenge. Reading experts have struggled to provide an accurate and relevant description of reading comprehension, and in recent decades, a wide variety of hypotheses have been put in advance (Perfetti & Stafura, 2014). Research in numerous countries has demonstrated that particular variations are possible for reading comprehension, even though the components' relative importance changes (Catts, 2018). Furthermore, it takes multiple language and cognitive processes to work together for reading comprehension, including vocabulary, decision-making, word reading skills, and comprehension monitoring.

The comprehension capacity is assisted by a variant of language abilities, thinking patterns, and information sources, making it challenging to choose which comprehension elements to highlight. Many components act as pressure points, if changed, will significantly affect students' thinking skills, helping to choose which components are useful assessments. Four reading comprehension components that are inference, knowledge, vocabulary, and comprehension, which are important to many reading comprehension theories are briefly reviewed here. Although the focus of this analysis is on higher-order comprehension skills, it recognizes the proper word understanding is fundamental or important to reading comprehension.

In English language teaching, it is necessary to take into consideration various reading techniques and styles to comprehend such procedures. The student provides large amounts of question-answer to pair (Moritz et al., 2015; Hill et al., 2016; Kadlec et al., 2016). There is no one right way to read a text; instead, different readers will read texts differently depending on a variety of factors, including what they are reading, who they are as readers, what they may be reading for and why, their level of language proficiency, their relationships with the writers, and many other factors. Moreover, many limitations of scope and depth factors of reading comprehension problems in existing data. First, several data received were too small or not naturalistic (Weston et al., 2016). Second, students answered only a single sentence but questions can be answered more (Chen et al., 2016; Rajpurkar et al., 2016). In other words, the readers must comprehend the text well to get the meaning of what they read. Furthermore, the best way to assess students' reading comprehension is by using the conference technique and multiple choice to get valid data.

By overcoming these issues, this research adjusts reading conference the techniques in teaching students to help the students understand the text they already read. A reading conference is an interaction in which students and lecturers share or discuss what they have read (Khoiriyah, 2020). A conference technique is a discussion with one student or more students to reciprocate the questions and the researchers or teachers assess their comprehension. Moreover, reading conference involves students and other students having a one-on-one discussion about their texts. Ahmed (2020) stated that reading technique showed many factors, including ineffective teaching strategies, low student motivation, and a failure to assess the student's reading comprehension. The goal of this research is to improve the student' comprehension in reading any kind of text, such as descriptive text, narrative text, recount text, procedure text, etc. Nowadays, the rate of literacy in Indonesia is decreasing, because many people think that reading is not necessary, especially a long and complex text that cannot be understood by a person. So, this research will prove since in a school, students have improved their reading comprehension and understand the meaning of the text.

This technique can be applied for instruction and assessment. Students with a strong vocabulary may recognize correlations between their current reading and earlier knowledge. Strong vocabulary is connected to improved reading comprehension and academic success. Moreover, teachers should utilize numerous ways to encourage vocabulary development in young students (Annetta et al., 2024). Reading comprehension involves creating a mental representation of the information in a text. Reading consists of three interrelated elements: the reader, the text, and the activity (Butterfuss et al., 2020). Students must get the confidence to express how they feel about what they have read. Furthermore, the reciprocal teaching style includes four steps: planning, asking questions, explaining, and summarizing (Nurdianti et al., 2019). Shortly, the four steps of the reciprocal teaching technique above are taught cooperatively in the classroom between the teacher and the students, with the goal of finding the student's answers according to the text. The researchers can help the students in expressing their opinions during the reading conference (Khoiriyah, 2020). The teacher's accurate selection of learning materials is crucial for success in the learning process to students (Fadilah & Farokhah, 2022). In addition, a reading conference is a really appropriate technique teaching students and the students are interested in and motivated in reading, so the researchers used conference technique and multiple-choice test to assess students' reading

comprehension by giving reading text. Purposely, this research focuses on these research questions; What is the students' reading comprehension assessed by multiple choice test compared to students' reading comprehension assessed by conference technique?

## RESEARCH METHOD

This current research used quantitative methods to students' reading comprehension by assessing multiple choice-test and conference technique. This research was conducted ex-post facto and no treatment. Ex post facto research is a study undertaken after an incident that resulted in changes to the individual variables that were observed overall. The goal is to identify possible causes of an improvement in behavior, indication or occurrence.

According to Abutabenjeh and Jaradat (2018), research design is a key subject that is central to research investigations in knowledge, psychology, sociology, and a variety of other fields. The goal of research is for a researcher to assess the data and show that it will lead to new knowledge. Research is the foundation of science, and the validity and accuracy of the findings need to be confirmed. Research must also be conducted logically and without manipulation, in other words, it must be clean and the results of the research can be proven and can be validated. Furthermore, Gunn (2017) highlighted that research methods education is in an ongoing process of continuation, and social science across all boundaries.

**Table 1** Conference Technique and Multiple Choice

No.	Instruments	Class
1.	Multiple Choice Test	8C
2.	Conference Technique	8C

Based on the Table 1 there was one class that tested by using two instruments. In the first test, the researchers conducted multiple choice test. The students answered 25 questions on the answer sheet. Because the researchers used ex-post facto, there was no treatment, and the second test was directly conducted. Meanwhile, the second test was conference technique which was the text have given to all of the students on the previous day, and assessed students' comprehension the next day.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The researchers took this research in SMP 6 Semarang. In this current research, the researchers chose one class as a sample. The participant was 8C grade and the total participants in this research were 34 students in the academic year 2024/2025.

**Table 2** Participants of the Research

Participants	Multiple Choice Test	Conference Technique
Students of SMPN 6 Semarang	34	34

As seen in Table 2, there were two instruments to test students' comprehension which were multiple choice test and conference technique. The total of participants in this sample was 34 students in the 8C class. The researchers used ex-post facto, so no treatment and next to the second test. The similarity between multiple choice test and conference technique is comprehending the text and the difference is for multiple choice test, after they read the text, they answered directly to the answer sheet and for conference technique, the students came forward one by one answering the researchers' question.

### Instruments

In conducting the research, the researchers applied two instruments: multiple choice test and conference technique. Multiple choice test had 25 questions, 15 questions were descriptive text and 10 questions were narrative text. The researchers handed out 34 questions and answer sheets. Every text had 5 questions for descriptive text and 10 questions for narrative text. Then, the second test is the conference technique, in which the text is given on the previous day by the researchers and assesses their comprehension by interviewing them to come forward. The researchers asked 1 question about the main idea of the text. Furthermore, the researchers assessed every answer that came out of their mouths and analyzed every student's answers.

### Method of Data Collection

In collecting the data, the researchers used two instruments to gather the data. In the first instrument or test, the researchers assessed using a multiple-choice test and gave the

questions and answers sheets. Furthermore, the students had to answer all the questions in the answer sheet. The first test took 1 meeting, in which all the students submitted all the answer sheets to researchers. The second test was assessed using conference technique to 34 students, for which the text was given on the previous day. The next day, the researchers assessed their comprehension by coming forward in a class one by one. The researchers interviewed them by asking one question about the main idea of the text. This conference technique took 2 meetings and the researchers gave around 5-7 minutes to answer one question, so this test would take around 2 hours and 50 minutes. Luckily, more than half of the students already answered one question from the researchers. Moreover, the rest of the students would be interviewed in the next day. At the end of these two instruments, the researchers collected all the answers and tried to analyze it.

#### Method of Data Analysis

In this analysis, there are two main data, multiple choice test and conference technique. In calculating the result of multiple-choice test, they had to answer 25 questions and the questions were divided into two kinds of texts. 1-15 questions for descriptive text and 16-25 questions for narrative text. Here is the table of scoring multiple choice test.

**Table 3** Scoring of Multiple-Choice Test

No.	Number of Questions	Scoring
1.	1-15 descriptive text and 16-25 narrative text	1 correct answer = 1 point
2.	Calculation	$25 \times 4 = 100$

As we can see from Table 3, the scoring of multiple-choice test depends on how many questions. Here, the questions are 25, and if the students get the perfect score which is 25 points, and times 4, the scoring will be perfect. The maximum score is 100.

In addition, the researchers not only assessed multiple choice test, but there was conference technique to get more data. The researchers used a rubric of reading comprehension adopted from Vigors (2020). The scoring rubric involves 5 components of reading: comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, accuracy, and fluency. Here is the rubric from Vigors:

**Table 4** Conference Technique Scoring Rubric

No.	Categories	Score
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1.	Comprehension	40%
2.	Vocabulary	20%
3.	Grammar	20%
4.	Accuracy	10%
5.	Fluency	10%
Total		100%

(Vigors, 2020)

Table 4 presents the scoring rubric for reading comprehension. There are five categories of scoring reading: comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, accuracy, and fluency. First, this research focuses on comprehension, so 40% for comprehension in conference technique. Second, the score for vocabulary is 20%: in this category, the student's answers must have a new vocabulary. Third, the score of grammar is 20% if their answers have grammatical and logical answers. Fourth, the accuracy score is 10%, accuracy is also important to researchers' analysis and whether students give straight answers or deviate answers. The last category is fluency: the score of fluency is 10% if they are fluent in answering researchers' questions the fluency score will be obtained.

Finally, after two tests had already been conducted, reading comprehension test scores were collected, and the researchers determined the score categories by adapting the ranges of scores from Hafsari (2020).

**Table 5** Reading Comprehension Category

No.	Aspek Penilaian	Skor
1.	91-100	Very Good
2.	83-90	Good
3.	75-82	Sufficient
4.	66-74	Less
5.	<66	Fail

(Hafsari, 2020)

Table 5 shows the level of achievement in reading comprehension text. The scores 91-100 is categorized as very good, and 83-90 is categorized as good. If the students' score is 75-82, it is categorized as sufficient, and 66-74 is categorized as less. Last, if the score is <66, is categorized fail.

## FINDINGS

In this present study, the study comparing students' reading comprehension as assessed by multiple choice test and conference technique are presented. The research assessed how these two different assessments affect the achievement of students and their comprehension. Moreover, these 2 tests took 10 meetings, which is multiple choice test was 2 meetings and conference technique took 8 meetings.

The first finding is the students' reading comprehension assessed by multiple choice test. the researcher assessed multiple choice test took 2 meetings which was the first day, 28 students submitted all the answer sheets and the second day, the rest of students of 6 students submitted their answer sheets to the researchers. Here are the students' scores from multiple choice test:

**Table 6** Students' Answers from Multiple-Choice Test

Students	Mean	Category
34	$2.688/34 = 79.05$	C

Table 6 shows that the researchers calculated all the answers from multiple choice test. Additionally, the researchers found the mean of multiple-choice test which is 79.05. According to reading comprehension category is C, it means this mean of multiple-choice test is sufficient.

Furthermore, in the second test, the researchers assessed conference technique to students. Moreover, the conference technique took 8 meetings to get all these scores. Many students have prepared for this second test, because the researchers gave the descriptive text to students early. The researchers interviewed them by asking the main idea of the text and analyzed their answers by using 5 categories which is comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, accuracy, and fluency. Here are the students' scores from conference technique:

**Table 7** Students' Answers from Conference Technique

Students	Mean	Category
34	$2.953 = 86.85$	B

Table 7 shows that the researchers calculated all the scores from conference technique. Additionally, the researchers found the mean of conference technique which is 86.85, and categorized B, which means good.

The researchers already found mean of the multiple-choice test is 79.05 and categorized B and mean of the conference technique is 86.85 and categorized B, so the researchers concluded mean of conference technique is higher than mean of multiple-choice test or have significance score. In other words, conference technique is the right answer for improving students' reading comprehension. After the researchers found mean of multiple-choice test and conference technique, the researchers analyzed using SPSS 21 to measure the difference. In this case paired sample statistics test was employed:

**Table 8** Paired Sample Statistics

Tests	Mean	Number of Students	Standard of Deviation	Standard Error Mean
Multiple Choice	79.05	34	3.82132	.65535
Conference Technique	86.85	34	2.45530	.42108

Table 8 represents a summary of paired sample statistics results of descriptive statistics from both sample multiple choice and conference technique. The mean of multiple choice was 79.05 and conference technique was 86.85, so the mean of conference technique is higher than multiple-choice, it means the use of conference technique is significance or has the difference or the use conference technique in student's 8th grade is successful.

**Table 9** Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences					t	df	S (2-t)
	Mean	Std. of Deviation	Std. Err Mean	95% Confidence Interval of Difference				
				L	U			
MC-CT	-7.7	3.9	.67	-9.1	-6.3	-11	33	.000

Note: MC: Multiple Choice; CT: Conference Technique

Table 9 shows that the value of Sig. (2-tailed) is  $0.000 < 0.005$ , so it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the results of reading comprehension assessed multiple choice and conference technique. By assessing two tests to students, this data can

improve the reading comprehension is significant or has improvement. Thus, the result of the paired sample t-test shows there is a significance difference between multiple choice and conference technique.

#### Discussion

The discussion investigates possible explanations for the differences between the two tests, including the chance for students' communication, answers, and responses during multiple choice test and conference technique. These two tests may improve students' ability to comprehend and communicate their understanding to answer researchers' questions more successfully. The comparison between students' reading comprehension assessed by multiple choice test and conference technique reveals a significant difference in outcomes, with the conference technique resulting in higher comprehension scores.

In addition, the researchers tested multiple-choice test to improve students' comprehension to get valid and concrete data about the students' answers. In every test, multiple choice questions (MCQs) are a crucial assessment technique (Burud et al., 2019). Furthermore, multiple choice questions are the right answer to know students' comprehension in a school. Multiple choice can be challenging it depends on the students, whether they understand the meaning of the text or not and various levels of proficiency in multiple-choice questions are either extremely simple or overly complex (Ha et al., 2019). Even though multiple-choice test can be challenging, there are points that this test has negative or disadvantages which are, that this test does not improve the ability to express, limitations in assessing information at the assessment level, and the majority of the examination time is spent reading selections and determining the correct answer. This is clear that the researchers need more data and can compare it to other data, which is using conference technique.

Additionally, some researches indicate that reading conferences are an excellent way to help students become more skilled readers. Students are free to select any literature for independent reading depending on their specific interests, but the researchers can encourage them to make smart choices through personal reading conferences and whole-group minilessons (Danter et al., 2020). Reading conferences are useful for education as well as assessment. The meetings of conferences need to be targeted to students and know as much as possible the knowledge of students. It is typically simple to determine from students'

responses whether students have read the text or not and how successfully they have understood it.

Reading can encourage almost every student in the entire school or community to require reading instruction in formal education (Igarashi & Suryadarma, 2023). As noted before conference technique not only improves the students' comprehension to read English text but also increases their motivation, adds new vocabulary, and helps teach grammar in their daily lives. In this case, the researchers also find the students' vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and accuracy. Additionally, Hasanudin and Fitrianiingsih (2020) stated that reading is the process of changing words into written texts in order to gain knowledge. It means reading is a process to read any literature and then get new knowledge.

The researchers assessed multiple choice test and the students felt comfortable or could read the text over and over again. Moreover, multiple-choice test makes the students read the text over and over, this first test has disadvantages which is there is a probability of success, but it does not enhance the capacity of expression, structuring, and writing questions takes skills and earn points by guessing the correct answer (Klufa, 2015). Furthermore, after multiple choice test have been done, then reading conference should be tested. Reading conferences can help students develop and achieve their reading comprehension. Moreover, conference technique is effective in teaching in junior high school, because by assessing this test the researchers and English teachers know the students' expressions and measure the five components of comprehension, which are comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, accuracy, and fluency. In addition, conference technique is an alternative way to find out the students' comprehension. By assessing conference technique, the students came forward, and being interviewed caused them to feel nervous and unconfident. Even though conference technique made students uncomfortable and unconfident, the students can overcome those issues by translating every word and learning more about Singapore text. Luckily, this second test has advantages that are suitable for any situation, and advances in statistical techniques make ex-post facto designs more viable.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this research, the researchers assessed conference technique and multiple-choice test to compare two instruments to get valid data or significant value. Conference technique was considered a new technique to obtain the students' comprehension and encourage them to come forward to be interviewed by researchers. Moreover, the researchers wish the students can increase their vocabulary, learn new grammar, develop their fluency, and give accurate answers. Not only conference technique, multiple choice was necessary in this case because the researchers tested two tests about the students' comprehension by doing multiple choice test and coming forward to answer the researchers' questions which is the main idea of the text. The researchers only focus on one sample of research participants. Furthermore, the researchers used ex-post facto, so no treatment to do in this research. In other words, the researchers just tested two tests and did not give any treatment to students. For future research, the researchers need to involve larger samples as participants to improve more about students' comprehension. Moreover, the expansion of multiple choice and conference technique also needs to examine its improvement in other skills, except reading. In addition, the use of multiple-choice test and conference technique proved that the students have a passion for improving English reading if English teachers give more exercises or tasks to students by using texts or any kinds of literature, and English teachers also can use more creative idea to reach the goal immediately.

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