The impact of task-based activities in reading skill for the students during Covid 19 pandemic

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Teachers in the COVID-19 pandemic believe that the instructional strategies in schools need to change in order to determine and formulate online teaching and learning goals. This study aims to investigate the impact of using task-based activities on reading skills for the eight students of the junior high school of SMPN 4 MDN. Quantitative research was employed in this research. It was a quasi-experimental research design, applying a pre-test–post-test control group design. The population of this research was the eighth-grade students of SMPN 4 MDN. The samples used in this research were 8B as an experimental class and 8C as a control class. The sample was taken by using random sampling. In collecting the data, the researchers used a reading test. The researcher used an independent t-test on SPSS version 21 to analyze the data. The results show that the students who are treated using task-based activities are more effective than those who are treated using conventional teaching methods. It means that teaching reading by using task-based activities has a better influence on students' reading skills.

Keywords: reading, reading skill, strategy, task-based activities

INTRODUCTION

Reading is the main activity to get information or verify knowledge from sources, and it is very important for students. It needs deep understanding to determine what is read, especially in understanding the content conveyed by the text. The students should need the accuracy so what is obtained can be the same as the author's intent. It can especially help students improve their vocabulary knowledge and become fluent readers in their reading skills. Moreover, it is a process of interaction between the readers and the text. The students can transfer their ideas and know the meaning of words and sentences. According to Jiang & Grabe (2007) reading is the ability to convey meaning by using graphic organizers. However, people can add to their information by reading text books, so that they can increase their knowledge. This makes the students more adept at applying and improving everything that has been learned and understood from reading books and developing their critical thinking and knowledge. Many researchers carry out their studies in reading activities because this is a basic activity to open one's perspective, especially the students', about new things (Küçükoğlu, 2013; Dewi & Salmiah, 2019; Martika & Hermayawati, 2016; Ariandika & Kartikawati, 2018).

Many studies have reported the use of strategy and media in reading activities with the purpose of understanding the meaning of words and contents of a text that is written in English.

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The use of strategy-directed inquiry activities (DIA) by Hamidi & Adnan (2013) helps the students develop their comprehension using their own efforts. Andriana (2017) has reported the use of mind mapping in reading comprehension for students. Then, the use of media comic strips can help the students comprehend the story of the text (Maulana & Fitrawati, 2017). Moreover, Restanto (2016) reported a study on teaching reading by using picture books and found that it helps the students read and understand the text, especially in narrative texts.

It means that a reading activity needs a strategy and media to help the students understand the meaning of words in the text, and it makes the students feel able to comprehend the content of the text. Furthermore, reading activity can be employed by using technique (Rosyida & Ghufron, 2018) by using strategy (Suryani, 2017) using media (Ismail et al., 2020). Therefore, in reading activities, the teacher should use suitable strategies in order to make reading activities in the classroom more fun and not boring. In reality, the problems with reading activity are still present.

Teachers in the COVID-19 pandemic believe that the instructional strategies in schools need to change in order to determine and formulate online learning goals that are in line with the national curriculum. The online meeting is being used to teach and learn in schools((Bhamani et al., 2020; Bestiantono et al., 2020; and Rasmitadila et al., 2020) Concerning instructional strategies, they emphasize the importance of technological readiness, including technological capacity, as well as whether online media is required to support the success of online learning. The learning is transferred using e-learning and the students still face difficulty in learning, especially in reading class. The students find many problems in understanding the meaning of the English text, and they do not know how to answer the questions related to the text. The students grasp to find information from the identifying topic, controlling idea, generic structure, and language feature in reading activities. It is very challenging for the teachers to teach reading during the outbreak COVID-19 pandemic. To figure out those problems, the teachers should be creative in teaching reading and use an effective activity to help the students verify the context of the text they are reading.

A task-based activity is intended to help the students learn through activities that prioritize working on tasks that are given based on varied activities to help the students understand and read the text clearly. This activity aims to create opportunities for the students' skills development through the development of knowledge. It is in line with Roskos & Neuman (2014) and Tahmasebi (2011) have reported as best practices for task-based language learning (TBLL). Keyvanfar & Modarresi, (2009) focus on task-based activities in teaching reading, and the result shows that the students perform better in their reading skills. It involves the creativity of the students who can provide the experience of the students. Mao (2012) focuses on the application of task-based activities in the reading classroom, and the result shows that task-based activities in teaching

reading help solve communication problems in reading activities. Irfan (2017) focuses on the task-based activity on students' reading comprehension, and the result shows that task-based activities can improve their understanding of the material so that they can get better results in reading comprehension. Mesbah (2016) focuses on the task-based in reading comprehension, and the result shows it can develop into the effectiveness of using tasks in teaching the reading comprehension skill. Chen & Chen (2005) examine the effectiveness of using a collaborative task-based approach in the teaching of reading, and the result shows that the effects of reading on vocabulary learning are strong, and it is necessary to believe that reading not only strengthens the effects of reading but also helps to improve learners' capability of using either familiar or new words.

Furthermore, during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, task-based studies are conducted by (Al Kandari & Al Qattan, 2020; Flores, 2020; and Ferrucci et al., 2020). It can be concluded that task-based language teaching activities are effective in reading activities. It improves students' performance and encourages them to be more creative in their reading activities. It can help students gain a better understanding of the material and improve their ability to use new words.

Based on the explanation above, the researchers are interested in learning more about the impact of task-based activities on reading skills for junior high school students. Diannisa & Ridwan (2021) propose that researchers investigate strategies for teaching reading comprehension during a pandemic in depth. Then, according to Hanewald & Trust (2013) researchers prefer junior high school students because in this grade, the students can profoundly alter the school experience. They know less about how their children, youth, families, and teachers view the transition and how it changes the trajectory of their education. Thus, the researchers do the study entitled "The Impact of Task-Based Activities on Reading Skills for Junior High School Students."

METHODS

This study aims to investigate the impact of using task-based activities on reading skills for junior high school students in one of the junior high schools in Madiun. In this research, the researchers used quantitative research. According to Creswell (2009), quantitative research is a means for testing objective theories by examining the relationships among variables. The research is quasi-experimental research design which uses pre-test and post-test control group design.

The researchers involved the subjects as the participants. Creswell (2003) states that a population is a group of people who have similar characteristics. The population of the study were the eighth-grade students at one of the junior high schools in Madiun. The sample for this research is 8B as an experimental class and 8C as a control class. There are 30 students in the experimental class (8B) and 30 students in

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the control class (8C). According to Creswell (2003), a sample is a subgroup of the objective population that the researcher regards as suitable for study for generalizing about the target population. In this research, the researchers chose the sample randomly, so all classes had the same chance of being selected. The researchers wrote the names of classes from 8A to 8J on small pieces of paper, then rolled the papers..

This study had 6 meetings, including pre-test, treatment, and post-test. As a result, there were four treatment meetings. Synchronous and asynchronous online meetings were used in learning activities. The Google form was used to administer the pretest asynchronously. The treatment was done in combination with Google Meet. The study during the Covid-19 outbreak, the students of the experimental and control groups participated in different activities. In the treatment activity, the syntax of task-based activities was used in the experimental group and the control group was then taught conventionally.

The experimental group used task-based activities in three stages: before reading, during reading, and post reading. The activities at the pre-reading stage included providing vocabulary stimulus to raise students' interest in the activity, building context based on the material to be achieved and studied, assigning similar tasks to help students understand the actual meaning, and providing prior knowledge about what will be carried out in the next stage. During the activity at this stage in the reading process, the activities focused on the content and meaning of the recount text, form groups during the reading process, and encouraged each student to contribute to reading recount text comprehension so that students can present the results of reading by re-elaborating in their own language. Then, at the post-reading stage, the students reported their reading results in discussions with friends and shared your perspectives on understanding the recount text that was read, explicitly focusing on grammar and language structure.

The students in the control group were taught using traditional asynchronous and synchronous methods of teaching and learning. The activities were divided into three stages: opening, whilst, and closing. The opening activity aroused the students' interest in participating in the teaching-learning process. The students were then given the recount text and asked to read and answer questions based on it. The students were then asked to discuss the outcome of their answers to the questions. The experimental and control groups were then given a post-test using the asynchronous Google form. A post test was performed to determine whether the two groups' mean reading scores significant difference.

Data collection was used to determine the students' learning outcomes. The researchers collected data using a reading test as the instrument. Reading tests were given to students to assess their reading abilities, and they should be graded using the reading scoring rubric. The reading test in this study was a short answer based on the recount text used in the experimental and control classes. The reading test was administered using a Google Form during the pre-test and post-test so that students could immediately access and work on the questions on the Google Form, which were then scored using a rubric

In this research, the researchers used descriptive and inferential statistics with the aim of analyzing sample data, and the results were applied to subjects using the t-test, which requires a homogeneity and normality test. Irfan (2017) states that the types of statistical analysis that were used during the experimental are: descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The researchers used an independent t-test in SPSS 21.0 version to analyze data. SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) is a data management and statistical analysis tool that has a very versatile and informative data processing capability and it was used in statistical analysis of data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results are described based on descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics describe the different means by which the students who are taught by using task-based activities and those who are taught by using conventional teaching. The descriptive statistics can be seen in Table 1, and the detailed results are in the appendix 1.

TABLE 1 | Descriptive Statistics

Activities	N	Min	Max	Mean
Task Based Activity	30	54	91	75
Conventional Teaching	30	54	85	66

The students who are taught using task-based activities have achieved better grades than those who are taught using conventional teaching. This can be seen from the means of the student in task-based activities, which is 75, and the student in conventional teaching, which is 66. To determine if the result has an effective impact, the following is a further description of the result.

Table 2 displays the group descriptive statistics, and appendix 2 contains the detailed results.

TABLE 2 | Group Descriptive Statistics

		Conventional teaching	N	Mean
Task Bask Activity		1.00	30	66
		2.00	30	65

The result shows the group statistical results of the two groups, and this shows that there is no significant difference in the reading skills of students in the pre-test of the students in task activity and the pre-test of the students in conventional teaching. This shows the number of samples of 30 students each (N = 30) for both groups. The means of the two groups aren't significantly different. The pre-test mean score of the task-based activity was 66. The mean score of the pre-test for conventional teaching is 65. The mean score of the pre-test experimental group is the same as the mean score of the pre-test control group. After presenting the group descriptive statistics, the following is the homogeneity test presented.

The homogeneity test is used to determine whether the experimental and control group data is homogeneous or not. Levene's test for variant equations from the Statistical

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Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0 is used to check the homogeneity of the data. The significant level used is an alpha value of 0.05. To see whether the two groups are homogeneous or not, the independent sample t-test is used to determine the difference in the significance of the two groups. The results are presented in Table 3 and the detailed results can be seen in appendix 3.

TABLE 3 | Homogeneity Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	
		F	Sig.
VAR00001	Equal variances assumed	3.276	.076

The result shows the independent sample t-test on the pre-test of the experimental group and the pre-test of the control group. The data shows that the significance value is.076, which is higher than the level of significance p value of.05 and means that two groups are homogenous.

The normality test is used to check whether the students' reading scores are normally distributed. The normality of the data in this study is carried out using the Shapiro-Wilk test. The results of the normality test are presented in Table 4 and the detailed result is in the appendix 4.

TABLE 4 | Tests of Normality

VAR00002				
		Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	Df	Sig.
VAR00001	1.00	.939	30	.086
	2.00	.933	30	.058

Table 4 above shows that the data is normally distributed. The results of the data from the task-based activity group with sig. 086 are higher than the significance level of the p value. 05). It means that the experimental group data is normally distributed. The result of the data from the control group is sig. 058; which is also higher than the significance level of p value. 05). It shows that the control group data is normally distributed.

The results of homogeneity and normality have been completed. This means that both groups are at the same ability level and the data is normally distributed. Then, a parametric statistical analysis is chosen to test the hypothesis. The results of hypothesis testing are presented in table 5, and the detailed results can be seen in the appendix 5.

TABLE 5| Group Descriptive Statistics

	Conventional teaching	N	Mean
Task Bask Activity	1.00	30	78
	2.00	30	74

Table 5 above shows that the mean scores of the two groups are different. The mean score of the experimental group is 78. Then, the mean score of the control group is 74. From both of the scores, it can be concluded that the two groups are significantly different.

To know the significance difference between both groups, an independent samples t-test is used. The results are presented in Table 6 and the detailed results can be seen in appendix 6.

TABLE 6 | Hypothesis testing

	t-test for Equality of Means		
	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	2.013	62	.048

Table 6 shows the results of the post-test experimental group and control group. The analysis was done by using an independent sample t-test. The result shows that the significant difference can be seen from the sig. 048 in the t-test. This result is lower than the p value of.05 significance tolerance. It means that the two are significantly different. It shows that the students in the experimental group have better reading skills than the students in the control group. It can be concluded that there is a significant difference between the two groups of experimental and control groups. It can be interpreted that the null hypothesis (H0) can be rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H1) is accepted, that is, employing task-based activities in teaching reading has a significant impact on the eighth grade students at junior high school in reading skills.

Based on the results presented in the previous section, the two groups show the different means of the students' reading scores. The students in the experimental group gain the highest scores. They have good information to do their tasks, so it means that both groups have a high mutuality of getting information from reading topics when doing the tasks however, the students have met via online using Google meet. There are many reasons and implications that the experimental group is more effective than the control group. During the COVID-19 outbreak situation, the majority of students can complete the tasks that have been given in the teaching and learning. They can also collect and exchange their knowledge related to the topic. Furthermore, the following is the detailed reason and implementation of the students in the experimental group by using task-based activities, which are effective for the students' reading skill.

The results show that students who are taught through task-based activities outperform students who are taught in conventional ways. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this helps in the teaching and learning process. It is consistent with the findings of Tartavulea, et al (2020) who has reported that the study has a positive impact on the teaching and learning process despite the spread of COVID-19. Teachers can still do an extremely good job of teaching if they use the appropriate activity. Another result of the task-based activity by (Rosyida & Ghufron, 2018) is that the reading activity using the strategy is effective, which means that teaching reading by using task-based activities has a

better influence on students' reading skills.

Task-based activities indicate that the students who are asked to do the task can improve their reading skills. Through the students' interactions when doing the tasks, they provide opportunities for them to get new vocabulary and monitor the language they use. During the tasks, the students can exchange ideas with other students via Google Meet. It shows that teaching reading by using task-based activities gives the students a better understanding of the material and gets better results in their reading skills (Irfan, 2017). Furthermore, task-based activities provide opportunities for students to get involved in sharing ideas.

The students in the experimental group, by using task-based activities, demonstrate that the students can get a lot of information by doing the tasks. Flores (2020) has mentioned that during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the teaching learning process using online task-based can help the students read for details, scan for details, and discuss with their friends effectively synchronously. So, it can improve the students' reading skills. The findings are also relevant to the findings of a study by Chalak (2015) which revealed that students in the experimental group can increase their knowledge by using task-based learning. It is found that the students can be involved in the class work by sharing information, paying attention, encouraging others to participate in the activities and tasks, volunteering, and working on the exercise. It is in line with Tahmasebi (2011) have mentioned that task-based learning makes the students active in English class. Moreover, Mesbah (2016) has mentioned that the use of tasks is more efficient in facilitating language learning. It can be seen that students' reading skills in the experimental group who are taught by using task-based instruction improve their marks.

The students in the experimental group can get a lot of knowledge through exchanging ideas and sharing information during work tasks. Ferrucci et al., (2020) has mentioned the study during the COVID-19 pandemic using the task bask approach. The result shows that it teaches the academic community how to redesign knowledge production processes with the goal of sharing tacit knowledge. The students have the opportunity to give students encouragement and improve their reading skills. Irfan, (2017) mentioned that the tasks provide the students with opportunities to practice the target language. The students can get information related to the grammatical word classes, generic structure, and chunks. It indicates that task-based instruction is effective for improving students' reading skills in getting information. Moreover, Keyvanfar & Modarresi, (2009) have mentioned task-based activities as an effective, practical, and innovative teaching method. It can increase students' involvement in classroom activities. It also improves students' skills and communicative abilities.

The impact of task-based activities helps students' reading skills to get good information. The result shows that the students in the experimental group can increase their knowledge and vocabulary. Esfandiari (2014) stated that the students in the experimental group outperform the students in the control group in reading table 4.7 shows that the mean of the experimental group is 77, 63, while the mean of the control group is 74, 22. The experimental group's mean is higher than the control group's mean. Furthermore, the significant result can be seen in table 4.8, which shows that the sig is.048, which is less than the level of significance p value of.05. The goal of using task-based activities in reading instruction in the EFL context is to improve reading skills. It is important for L2 performance for readers in the Indonesian context. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, it plays a significant role in L2 performance for the readers' linguistic knowledge, including vocabulary and grammar, in the Indonesian context (Al Kandari & Al Qattan, 2020). As a result, this study agrees with other studies that show task-based activities are effective in teaching reading and improving students' reading skills.

This study yields significant insights: task-based learning affects how students acquire good informational reading skills. This is supported by other studies, both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. Students in the experimental group learn more than students in the control group. During the tasks, students have the opportunity to share their knowledge about the topic, as well as exchange ideas and information. The only difference is between using Google Meet during a pandemic and face-to-face communication during non-pandemic situations.

CONCLUSION

The use of task-based activities in reading skill for the students indicates that the students who are taught by using task-based activities are more effective than the students who taught by using conventional teaching. It means that reading activities by using task-based (in experimental group) gives a better influence on students' reading skill. Task-based activities indicate that the students who asked to do the task can improve the reading skill. Through the students' interaction when doing the tasks provide the opportunities for them to get new vocabulary and to monitor the language they used. During the tasks, the students can exchange ideas with other students. It shows that in reading by using task-based activities make the students better understanding about the material and get better results in reading test. Furthermore, task-based provides opportunities for students to involve in sharing ideas.

Otherwise, the study has limitation on the process of the use of task activities. In task based activities still lack of topic to be given to the students. This means that the kinds of the topics are limited. The use of the topic and kinds of the text

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are not graded and varied. The materials are too easy to be figured out so there is no challenging for the students to explore more about the text. The text provided is also to short. The situation isn't interactive during the teaching learning process because the students only read the task and answer the questions. Thus, the future researchers are suggested to provide the students with the various kinds of the text to improve the reading activity in teaching learning process. This needs to improve the students' mastery on reading in order to reach the goal of skill.

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APPENDIX

Appendix1

TABLE 1 | Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Task based activity	30	37	54	91	75	10
Conventional Teaching	30	31	54	85	66	9
Valid N (listwise)	30					

Appendix 2

TABLE 2 | Group statistic

	Conventional teaching	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Task based Activity	1.00	30	66	13	2.5
	2.00	30	65	11	1.9

Appendix 3

TABLE 3 | Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
VAR00001	Equal variances assumed	3.276	.076	.233	58	.817	.73333	3.14728	-5.56663	7.03330
	Equal variances not assumed			.233	55.321	.817	.73333	3.14728	-5.57313	7.03980

Appendix 4

TABLE 4 |Tests of Normality

	VAR00002	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
VAR00001	1.00	.148	30	.092	.939	30	.086
	2.00	.157	30	.057	.933	30	.058

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Appendix 6

TABLE 6 | Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
VAR00 001	Equal variances assumed	.077	.782	2.013	62	.048	3.40625	1.69230	.02339	6.78911
	Equal variances not assumed			2.013	58.547	.049	3.40625	1.69230	.01942	6.79308