

Unlocking Reading Comprehension: A Comparative Study of Individual vs. Group Annotation Strategies

Caroline Victorine Katemba

ctobing@unai.edu

Universitas Advent Indonesia

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Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of individual versus group annotation procedures in improving reading comprehension among students learning English as a foreign language. The study aims to examine the effects of two annotation procedures, individual and group annotations, on students' reading comprehension and analyze their reactions to these strategies. Data were obtained from two groups of eighth-grade students, one using individual annotation and the other employing group annotation methodologies. The study used pre-and post-tests to assess comprehension improvement and statistical analyses (SPSS) to compare the two groups. The results showed that, while both strategies improved reading comprehension, students who used group annotation made larger gains. The group annotation approach also increased students' interest and motivation, as shown by more favorable responses to the strategy in post-treatment questionnaires. The findings indicate that group annotation is more effective than individual annotation in improving reading comprehension because it promotes better teamwork, motivation, and a deeper grasp of the material. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the need to tailor reading tactics to individual student characteristics, implying that group annotation can be a more interesting and successful approach to developing reading abilities.

Keywords: reading comprehension, annotation strategies, individual annotation, group annotation, English as a foreign language

INTRODUCTION

Research on the cognitive processes involved in reading and reading comprehension is exceedingly extensive. Models of comprehension have been systematically developed to meticulously explain the intricate mediation of experience and world knowledge, text and reading knowledge, as well as the multifaceted purposes of the reader. Despite the vast amount of research conducted, the understanding of the complex nature of reading comprehension remains primarily limited. Countless reading comprehension difficulties and challenges stem from the wide-ranging variations in individual reader characteristics, surpassing any variations found solely within the text material. Thus, in order to profoundly enhance educational practices and foster optimal reading comprehension, approaches to

comprehending textual materials must effectively address and tailor to the unique characteristics and idiosyncrasies of individual readers as they dynamically interact and engage with specific texts. Consequently, these approaches should not be restricted only to the consideration of the text itself, isolated from the intrinsic interests and distinctive purposes of the readers. Such a comprehensive and holistic perspective fervently emphasizes that it is not solely the instruction that directly teaches children to comprehend; rather, it is through a gradual internalization of both textual and reading knowledge, as an integral component of their evolving and distinctive individual cognitive processes, that children genuinely learn to comprehend and navigate the multifarious realms of reading.

English has become the global lingua franca, making proficiency in the language more essential than ever for communication, education, and professional success. Recognizing this, the Indonesian government has integrated English into the curriculum at all educational levels, from primary school to university. Reading comprehension is an important skill for academic performance, especially in non-native settings such as Indonesia, where English is taught as a foreign language. Regardless of teaching methods, motivation and engagement remain key hurdles in increasing pupils' reading skills. Language learning encompasses four core skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These skills are typically categorized as receptive (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and writing). Among these, reading holds particular significance, especially for students in non-English-speaking countries like Indonesia, where English is taught as a foreign language (Kurniawan, 2020). The research underscores that reading proficiency is foundational to academic success and effective communication in a globalized world.

However, English is often seen as a difficult subject for junior high school students, particularly in contexts where it is a foreign language rather than a second language (Fahmi et al., 2021). This perception of difficulty, combined with a lack of motivation, frequently results in lower reading engagement and comprehension. According to Bridges (2020), fostering students' interest in reading requires giving them access to reading materials that resonate with their personal interests and preferences. By reading extensively, students are more likely to build confidence and develop a more positive attitude toward learning (Baker, 2021).

Despite these efforts, a significant barrier to reading comprehension remains: the lack of motivation among students, particularly in primary and secondary schools. Research by Guthrie and Humenick (2020) highlights that students who struggle with reading tend to disengage, further hindering their comprehension abilities. This challenge is compounded by the diverse range of language skills within classrooms, which often leads to varying levels of engagement with reading tasks (Potot, et.al., 2023). To address this, reading strategies that cater to individual differences are essential for motivating students and improving their comprehension skills.

One promising approach is the use of annotation strategies to enhance reading comprehension. Annotation, which involves actively engaging with the text through notes, highlights, and comments, has been shown to support students, particularly those with comprehension difficulties (Kacem & Omheni, 2016). This strategy encourages a deeper engagement with the text, promotes critical thinking, and helps students maintain focus (Otten, 2021). As research by Zywica and Gomez (2020) suggests, annotation enables students to not only better understand the content but also engage more meaningfully with the material, enhancing both learning outcomes and motivation.

Given the positive impact of annotation strategies, this study aims to compare the effectiveness of two distinct reading approaches: individual annotation and group annotation. By examining how these strategies influence students' reading comprehension and motivation, the research seeks to determine which approach is more effective in enhancing student engagement with English texts. The following research questions guide the investigation:

1. How does individual versus group annotation strategies impact students' reading comprehension?
2. Is there a significant difference in reading comprehension improvement between students using individual annotation strategies and those using group annotation strategies?
3. How do students respond to the implementation of annotation strategies in reading tasks?

Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis (Ho): There is no significant difference in reading comprehension improvement between students using individual annotation strategies and those using group annotation strategies

Alternative Hypothesis (Ha): There is a significant difference in reading comprehension improvement between students using individual annotation strategies and those using group annotation strategies.

Through this comparative study, the research aims to offer insights into how annotation strategies can be effectively integrated into English reading instruction to improve both comprehension and motivation, addressing the unique needs of students in diverse educational settings.

Research Methodology

This research is a quantitative study. The design uses pre-tests and post-tests. The researcher used this method to determine the student's reading comprehension before and after the treatment. The research design is shown in table 3.1

Table 1 Research Design

Subject	Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
Class A	T1	X1	T2
Class C	T1	X1	T2

T1= Scores of the students in the pre-test; T2= Scores of the students in the post-test

X1= Treatment using experimental

The Population and Sample

The participants of this study were students from SMPN 5 Lembang, located in West Java, Indonesia. According to data provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemdikbud), the school had a total population of 426 students, comprising 214 females and 212 males.

The sample for the study included two eighth-grade classes, selected to receive comparative instructional treatments. The first class, consisting of 26 students, was designated as the **Individual Class**, where students were taught using individual annotation text strategies. The second class,

comprising 24 students, was designated as the **Group Class**, where students were instructed using group annotation materials.

Participants' ages ranged from 13 to 15 years, ensuring a relatively homogenous developmental stage for the analysis.

Research Instrument

The research instrument served as a key tool for determining the outcomes of this study. To begin, the researcher administered a pilot test consisting of 50 multiple-choice questions to Grade VIII students at SMPN 5 Lembang. Based on the results of this pilot test, the researcher developed a pre-test tailored to the study.

This pre-test was then administered to sample groups from Grade VIII, who were instructed using the Annotation Text Strategy. Following the treatment, the researcher conducted a post-test for the same group. Notably, the post-test was identical to the pre-test to ensure consistency in measuring the effectiveness of the intervention.

Data Gathering

In this study, the researcher began by conducting a preliminary investigation to gain an understanding of the research sample. Subsequently, the researcher developed the research instrument and designed a detailed lesson plan spanning eight meetings. Additionally, the researcher obtained formal permission from the Dean of the Faculty to proceed with the study. The data was collected with several steps below:

Conducting the Pilot Test

The pilot test was administered to ninth-grade students at SMPN 5 Lembang to evaluate the validity of the test items using the Anates Software Program. Once the data were collected, the researcher analyzed the results through the same program to ensure the reliability and accuracy of the test instrument.

Conducting Pre-test

The pre-test was administered prior to the treatment to assess students' reading abilities before the intervention. This pre-test was conducted after the pilot test, with only the valid questions from the pilot test included in both the pre-test and post-test. The results of the pre-test were analyzed to determine whether the data were homogeneous and normally distributed.

Two classes participated in this study, both serving as experimental groups for a comparative analysis between individual annotation and group annotation strategies. The detailed steps followed for each class are outlined below.

Procedures for Individual Annotation Text

1. **Introduction to Annotation:**

The researcher begins by explaining the concept of annotation to the students and providing an overview of its purpose and benefits.

2. **Initial Reading:**

Students are instructed to read the text in its entirety at least twice.

3. **Quick Reading:**
During the first read-through, students are encouraged to read quickly to grasp the general meaning and main ideas of the text.
4. **Detailed Reading:**
In the second read-through, students are asked to read carefully, focusing on deeper comprehension.
5. **Identifying Key Points:**
The researcher guides students to mark any parts of the text they find confusing, interesting, unfamiliar, surprising, or important.
6. **Annotation Practice:**
Students begin annotating by circling, underlining, or using sticky notes to highlight significant ideas and details in the text.
7. **Assessment of Comprehension:**
Finally, the researcher administers a quiz to evaluate students' understanding of the reading material.

Procedures for Group Annotation

1. **Introduction and Group Formation:**
The researcher introduces the concept of annotation, explains its purpose, and organizes students into groups of 3–4 members each.
2. **Initial Reading:**
Students are instructed to read the text collectively, completing at least two full read-throughs.
3. **Quick Reading:**
For the first read-through, students are encouraged to skim the text to grasp the general idea and overall structure.
4. **Detailed Reading:**
During the second read-through, students focus on careful, in-depth reading to analyze the content more thoroughly.
5. **Identifying Key Points:**
The researcher guides each group to collaboratively mark sections of the text they find confusing, interesting, unfamiliar, surprising, or important.
6. **Annotation Practice:**
Groups begin annotating together, using circles, underlining, or sticky notes to highlight significant ideas and details within the text.
7. **Comprehension Assessment:**
A quiz is administered to evaluate each group's understanding of the reading and the annotation process.

Conducting Post-test

Before implementing the Annotation Text strategy, the researcher administered a pre-test to assess the students' baseline reading comprehension abilities. At the conclusion of the study, a post-test was conducted to evaluate whether there was any improvement in the students' reading comprehension skills.

Validity

Validity test was used to determine whether the pilot test can be used in the research.

The classification of validity is shown in the Table 2

Table 2. The Result of the Validity

Number of Question	r_{xy}	Interpretation
-	$0.80 \leq r_{xy} \leq 1.00$	Very high
26, 40, 44, 46, 45	$0.608 \leq r_{xy} \leq 0.752$	High
18, 22, 27, 31, 33, 35, 38, 39, 3, 4, 6, 8, 11, 12, 2	$0.404 \leq r_{xy} \leq 0.575$	Moderate
1, 5, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 23, 24, 25, 28, 30, 37, 43, 47, 48, 49, 50	$0.202 \leq r_{xy} \leq 0.394$	Low
16, 21, 34, 36, 41, 42	$0.063 \leq r_{xy} \leq 0.173$	Very low
7, 17, 29, 32	$-0.041 \leq r_{xy} \leq -0.339$	Not valid

Based on the results, questions were considered valid if their scores exceeded 0.00. According to the table of calculations, 28 items were determined to be valid. Of these, 5 items had high validity, 15 items were moderate, 20 items were low, 6 items were very low, and 4 items were found to be invalid.

Table 3. The Recapitulation of Pilot Test

Number of questions	Validity	Difficulty level	Discrimination
1	Low	Moderate	Sufficient
2	Moderate	Moderate	Poor
3	Moderate	Difficult	Good
4	Moderate	Easy	Good
5	Low	Moderate	Sufficient
6	Moderate	Moderate	Good
7	Not valid	Moderate	Very poor
8	Moderate	Moderate	Good
9	Low	Moderate	Sufficient
10	Low	Moderate	Sufficient
11	Moderate	Easy	Goodr
12	Moderate	Easy	Sufficient
13	Low	Easy	Sufficient
14	Low	Easy	Sufficient
15	Low	Easy	Sufficient
16	Very low	Moderate	Poor
17	Not valid	Moderate	Very poor
18	Moderate	Difficult	Poor
19	Low	Easy	Sufficient
20	Low	Moderate	Sufficient
21	Very low	Difficult	Poor
22	Moderate	Easy	Good
23	Low	Difficult	Poor
24	Low	Moderate	Sufficient
25	Low	Moderate	Sufficient
26	High	Easy	Good
27	Moderate	Easy	Good
28	Low	Easy	Sufficient

29	Not valid	Difficult	Very poor
30	Low	Moderate	Sufficient
31	Moderate	Moderate	Good
32	Not valid	Moderate	Very poor
33	Moderate	Easy	Sufficient
34	Very low	Moderate	Poor
35	Moderate	Moderate	Good
36	Ver low	Moderate	Poor
37	Low	Easy	Sufficient
38	Moderate	Easy	Good
39	Moderate	Easy	Good
40	High	Easy	Good
41	Very low	Easy	Poor
42	Very low	Moderate	Poor
43	Low	Moderate	Sufficient
44	High	Easy	Good
45	High	Moderate	Good
46	High	Easy	Good
47	Low	Moderate	Good
48	Low	Moderate	Sufficient
49	Low	Easy	Sufficient
50	Low	Easy	Sufficient

Discussion, Data Analysis & Findings

In analyzing the data, the researcher used Microsoft Excel and the Statistical Program, SPSS 21.0. The result of pre-test, post-test, Standard Deviation, and Normalized Gain of each class is shown in the Table

Table 4. Pre-Test, Post Test, Standard Deviation, and Normalized Gain

	Annotation text-Individual		Annotation text-Group	
	Mean	St. Deviation	Mean	St. Deviation
Pre-Test	49.60	11.53617	53.04	8.76057
Pos-Test	71.36	13.77461	81.09	7.25882
Normalized Gain	0.4362	0.21272	0.5873	0.16248

According to the table above, students in the Group class achieved higher scores than those in the Individual class. However, the scores for both groups increased following the implementation of the Annotation Text strategy, as reflected in the mean scores of the post-test.

Additionally, the standard deviation for the Group class decreased from 8.76 to 7.25 in the post-test, suggesting that the data points became more clustered around the mean (expected value). In contrast, the standard deviation for the Individual class increased from 11.53 to 13.77, indicating that the data points were more spread out over a wider range of values.

Furthermore, the gain scores for both groups were at a moderate level, indicating that while the post-test scores showed improvement, the overall progress remained within a moderate range.

Test of Normality

A normality test was conducted to determine whether the pre-test data followed a normal distribution, a normality test was conducted. Following the normality assessment, the researcher performed a homogeneity test to check whether the populations were homogeneous. The results of the normality test for the pre-test scores are presented in Table 5.

Table 5 .The Normality Test Result for Pre-test Score

		Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a		
	Group	Statistic	Df	Sig.
VIII A	1	.136	25	.200*
VIII C	2	.130	21	.200*

Based on the data, it depicted the data population of both classes are normally distributed; where the significant value of VIIIA, group 1, was $0.200 > \alpha (0.05)$ and the significant value of VIII C, group 2, was $0.200 > \alpha (0.05)$. Since both data are normally distributed, then for the data based on the mean row is considered for the homogeneity test.

Test of Homogeneity of Variance

To see the homogeneity of population variances, homogeneity test was done. The result of the homogeneity test is shown in the table 6

Table 6. The Homogeneity Test Result for Pre-test Score

Homogeneity Test of Pre-Test Score	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Data pretest on mean	2.856	1	44	.098

Based on the data, it can be seen the data was homogenous because the significant value is $0.098 > \alpha (0.05)$. Since normality test was normally distributed and the result of homogeneity test was homogeneous

Independent Sample Test

Since the data is homogeneous, an independent sample t-test is conducted and the result is depicted. The independent Sample T-test Result for the Pre-test Score is shown in the table 7

Table 7. The Independent Sample T-test Result for Pre-test Score

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means		
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre_test					
Equal variances assumed	2.856	.098	-1.123	44	.267
Equal variances not assumed			-1.151	43.604	.256

To find out the answer of the second question, the researcher conducted the normalized gain score for both groups by using SPSS 16.0. From the result, the significant value is $0.267 > \alpha (0.05)$, it means that there is no significant difference in the results of the pre-test score between grades VIII A and VIII C, so that both classes can be compared.

After conducting the pre-test, the researcher applied the treatment and at the end of the session, there was a post-test to know the improvement in reading comprehension of the students. Then, the pre-test and post-test scores from both classes were calculated using the Normalized Gain formula.

Test of Normality

The researcher conducted normality test for the result of the gain score. The Normality Test Result for Normalized Gain Score is shown in the table 8

Table 8. The Normality Test Result for Normalized Gain Score

Group	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
AC 1	.983	25	.937
2	.957	21	.451

Based on the data above, it showed that normalized gain for both groups was normally distributed, it proved from the significance of Individual class, that group 1 was $0.937 > \alpha (0.05)$, and the importance of group class, group 2 was 0.451. Thus, H_0 was accepted, and it meant the data was normally distributed.

Test of Homogeneity Variance

To see the homogeneity of population variances, homogeneity was done. The homogeneity result for the normalized gain score is shown in table 9

Table 9 The Homogeneity Result for Normalized Gain Score

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
2.172	1	44	.148

Based on the above, the significant value is $0.148 > \alpha (0.05)$, so it meant that the population variances were homogenous. Since the data is not homogenous. The independent sample test is shown in Table 10

Table 10 The Independent Sample Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2- tailed)
Gain	Equal variances assumed	2.172	.148	-2.666	44	.011
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.729	43.649	.009

Based on the data above, it showed that the significant value was $0.011 \leq \alpha (0.05)$, so that meant H_0 was rejected, then it becomes the answer to the second statement of the problem that there was a significant difference between those who are taught Annotation text individually and those who are taught Annotation text in group.

Questionnaire

The additional data required for the present study were collected by administering questionnaires to the subjects in order to know their response to the Annotation text. The results questionnaire for individual class and groups are shown in Tables 8 and 9

Table 8 : Individual Class

No	Strongly agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Disagree	Total score	(Total score/40)*100	Criteria of response
1	28	3	4	-	35	87.5	Positive
2	4	12	2	-	18	45	Negative
3	16	15	2	-	33	82.5	Positive
4	20	12	2	-	34	85	Positive
5	-	21	6	-	27	67.5	Moderate
6	8	18	-	1	27	67.5	Moderate
7	8	18	-	1	27	67.5	Moderate
8	8	24	-	1	33	82.5	Positive
9	4	24	-	1	29	72.5	Moderate
10	4	15	2	-	21	52.5	Negative
11	12	24	4	-	40	100	Positive
12	-	15	2	1	18	45	Negative
13	16	15	2	-	33	82.5	Positive
14	16	18	2	-	36	90	Positive

15	8	21	2	1	32	80	Positive
16	4	21	-	-	25	62.5	Moderate
17	4	18	2	1	25	62.5	Moderate
18	8	15	2	-	25	62.5	Moderate
19	16	12	-	1	29	72.5	Moderate
20	20	18	2	-	40	100	Positive
21	4	15	2	1	22	55	Negative
22	4	15	2	-	21	52.5	Negative
23	4	15	2	-	21	52.5	Negative
24.	4	18	2	-	24	60	Moderate

Table 9 Group Class

From the table above, the researcher might pull out a conclusion as shown in table 10

Table 10. Percentage of Students' Response

No	Strongly agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Disagree	Total score	(Total score/40)*100	Criteria of response
1	-	21	6	-	27	67.5	Moderate
2	-	12	12	-	24	60	Moderate
3	-	24	4	-	28	70	Moderate
4	8	12	8	-	28	70	Moderate
5	8	15	4	1	28	70	Moderate
6	-	18	6	1	25	62.5	Moderate
7	-	24	4	-	28	70	Moderate
8	8	15	6	-	29	70	Moderate
9	12	15	2	1	30	75	Moderate
10	-	21	6	1	27	67.5	Moderate
11	8	24	-	-	32	80	Moderate
12	4	21	4	-	29	72.5	Moderate
13	-	21	6	1	27	67.5	Moderate
14	-	6	14	-	21	52.5	Negative
15	16	15	2	-	33	82.5	Positive
16	16	15	-	-	33	82.5	Positive
17	8	18	4	-	30	75	Moderate
18	8	21	2	1	31	77.5	Positive
19	8	15	6	-	29	72.5	Moderate
20	16	12	4	1	32	80	Positive
21	8	15	6	-	29	72.5	Moderate
22	-	27	2	-	29	72.5	Moderate
23	4	24	2	-	30	75	Moderate
24	-	27	2	-	29	72.5	Moderate
25	-	24	4	-	28	70	Moderate
26	-	30	-	-	30	75	Moderate

Criteria of Response	Percentage of Students' Response
Positive	26%
Moderate	60%
Negative	14%

It was found that 26% of the total of the subjects have positive responses toward Annotation text, 60% are moderate, and 14% of the subjects have negative responses in the implementation of Annotation text.

Discussion of The Research Finding

Refer to research question number 1, The data from the Individual and Group classes showed that the students' reading comprehension increased, it can be seen from the mean of the pre-test score which is 49.60 Individual class & 53.09 Group class to the mean post-test score in, 71.36 Individual class & Group class 81.09 and the mean of the gain score which is 0.4362 Individual class & Group class 0.16248. According to the researcher's experience in the field, the students from the Group class were more interested and enthusiastic about reading the book. On the other hand, students who read individually tended to be quieter and not excited about reading the book. However, almost all the students aimed to be capable of reading English passages for them to achieve their goals, so even though they found some difficulties while reading they still read it until it is finished. The researcher also helped when the students asked the meaning of some words.

In an article entitled *Self-Study vs. Learning Groups: Which Is Better?*, Thomas Edison State College described that studying alone may have some benefits such as 1) minimizing distraction, 2) allowing students to pace themselves, and 3) improving focus. However, when students work individually, they automatically do not have information to others from others, there is no open discussion that can broaden students' understanding, and there is no one who can motivate them. As the article explains, learning groups can 1) Increase references, 2) Expand access to information, and 3) boost motivation. To sum up, reading English passages through annotation text in groups is much better than reading individually. In addition, from the evaluation result, students who read in groups answered the questions more correctly than the students who read individually.

Refer to research question number 2, the result of the data showed, that there is a significant difference in students' reading comprehension between those who used Annotation text individually and those who used Annotation text in the group. From the result of normalized gain, we can see that the students who read individually got 0.4362, and reading with the group got 0.5873. So, it can be said that annotation text is more applicable if the students read the book in the form of groups.

Refer to research question number 3, looking up the findings of the questionnaire result, the total of positive responses is 27.80%, 63.67% are moderate, and 8.87% of the subjects have negative responses toward Annotation text. It can be said that most of the students agree with the implementation of Annotation text in improving their reading comprehension.

These findings indicate that the statement stated in Chapter 1, the reading comprehension of eighth-grade students of SMPN 5 Lembang in the academic year 2018/2019 can be improved through annotation text. Kacem, A, H., & Omheni, N. (2016) stated that training students in reading strategies by integrating them with reading assignments in classrooms and giving annotations to them can make changes between students and texts that really improve. Annotations cannot only be used in classrooms but can also be used outside the classroom to improve their input language.

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