



# Improving Students' Reading Comprehension of Descriptive Text Through Multiple Intelligences Strategy at SMP Swasta Harvard Medan

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## Abstrak

Strategi Kecerdasan Majemuk digunakan dalam proyek ini untuk membantu siswa kelas tujuh di SMP Swasta Harvard Medan meningkatkan pemahaman membaca mereka. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain Penelitian Tindakan Kelas (PTK) yang dilaksanakan dalam dua siklus, masing-masing terdiri dari empat tahap: perencanaan, tindakan, observasi, dan refleksi. Subjek penelitian adalah sejumlah siswa yang mengalami kesulitan dalam memahami teks deskriptif, terutama dalam mengenali gagasan utama dan unsur-unsur pendukung. Data dikumpulkan melalui lembar observasi, wawancara, catatan lapangan, dokumentasi, dan tes pemahaman membaca. Analisis data dilakukan dengan pendekatan kualitatif dan kuantitatif, yang berfokus pada hasil observasi kelas serta evaluasi kinerja siswa melalui pre-test dan post-test. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa setelah penerapan Strategi Kecerdasan Majemuk, pemahaman membaca siswa meningkat secara signifikan. Temuan ini membuktikan bahwa dengan memanfaatkan berbagai jenis kecerdasan yang dimiliki setiap siswa, strategi ini berhasil membantu mereka memahami teks deskriptif. Oleh karena itu, studi ini merekomendasikan penggunaan strategi ini secara lebih luas dalam pembelajaran membaca untuk meningkatkan minat, pemahaman, dan hasil belajar siswa.

**Kata Kunci:** Pemahaman membaca, Strategi kecerdasan majemuk

## Abstract

*The Multiple Intelligences Strategy will be used in this project to help seventh-grade students at SMP Swasta Harvard Medan enhance their reading comprehension. A Classroom Action Research (CAR) design was used in the study, and it was conducted in two cycles with four steps each: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The study's subjects comprised a number of students who had trouble comprehending descriptive writings, especially when it came to recognizing the key concepts and supporting elements. Observation sheets, interviews, field notes, documentation, and reading comprehension assessments were used to gather data. The results of classroom observations and the evaluation of students' performance through pre-test and post-test evaluations were the main focus of the qualitative and quantitative methodologies used to examine the data. The results showed that after using the Multiple Intelligences Strategy, students' reading comprehension significantly improved. The findings showed that by leveraging the different forms of intelligence that each learner possesses, this approach successfully assisted students in understanding descriptive texts. In order to improve students' interest, understanding, and learning outcomes, the study suggests using this method more widely in reading education.*

**Keywords:** Reading comprehension, Multiple intelligences strategy

## Introduction

English is considered a global language commonly employed for international communication. It influences everyday conversations and key areas such as economics, education, technology, and culture. English facilitates international collaboration and the exchange of information worldwide.

In Indonesia English is taught as a foreign language as part of the official school curriculum. The objective is to equip students with linguistic proficiency that satisfies contemporary needs. People who are proficient in English have an advantage over others, especially in the workplace, in higher education, and when it comes to accessing international information sources. As a result, improving English is essential. Together with speaking, writing, and listening, reading is one of the four primary English language learning skills. Students' knowledge and comprehension of the material presented in written texts, such as books, articles, and periodicals, are increased via reading. Students can develop their vocabulary, comprehend language structure, and sharpen their critical thinking abilities through reading exercises.

However, in practice, Indonesian junior high school students still encounter significant challenges in reading comprehension. Data from Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Ministry (2023) reveals that only around 59% of students at this level meet the minimum standards for reading proficiency. This suggests that many students struggle to comprehend texts deeply and thoroughly. Such circumstances highlight the need for more effective and innovative teaching strategies to improve students' reading abilities.

According to a preliminary study done at SMP Swata Harvard Medan, pupils have a number of difficulties comprehending descriptive English texts in class. Students' inadequate vocabulary was one of the issues that surfaced. Words they had just come upon were hard for them to understand. Second, pupils struggled to summarize the reading's substance, identify the text's overall content, uncover the primary idea, and look for specific information in the text. Last but not least, students struggled to identify subjects, verbs, nouns, and adjectives in phrases, which hindered their ability to extract information from the text.

Most students tend to be passive during reading activities. Their lack of motivation toward learning English often results in disinterest and reluctance to continue reading tasks. Considering these challenges, alternative approaches are needed to overcome difficulties in teaching reading comprehension. One promising method that aligns with students' learning needs is the Multiple Intelligences strategy.

Intelligence can be defined as the capacity to understand and process information swiftly and accurately, influenced by both biological and psychological factors. The Multiple Intelligences approach emphasizes the individuality of each learner. Gardner (2013:19) defines intelligence as the ability to solve problems or produce products that hold value within a particular cultural or community context. According to Slavin (2006), the application of Multiple Intelligences in collaborative learning can significantly enhance students' reading comprehension. Through group work that incorporates diverse intelligence types, students can better understand descriptive texts via discussions, projects, and presentations. Learning based on Multiple Intelligences enables students to connect reading materials with their personal experiences and strengths, thereby fostering greater engagement and comprehension.

Next, according to Howard Gardner (Gardner & Hatch, 1989), intelligence is the capacity to solve issues or produce goods that are appreciated in one or more cultural contexts. Drawing upon biological and cultural research, he proposed a model comprising eight distinct types of intelligence, challenging the conventional framework that typically recognizes only linguistic and logical-mathematical abilities. The intelligences identified by Gardner include:

- 1. Linguistic Intelligence.** Directly enhances reading skills by improving vocabulary, grammar, and the ability to interpret meaning from text.
- 2. Logical-Mathematical Intelligence.** Helps readers analyze arguments, recognize patterns, and understand cause-effect relationships within a passage.
- 3. Spatial Intelligence.** Supports visualization of scenes, characters, and concepts described in text especially useful for narrative and descriptive reading.
- 4. Musical Intelligence.** Improves focus and rhythm during reading. Some learners benefit from reading with background music or using rhythmic techniques to process information.

**5. Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence.** Encourages active learning strategies like note-taking, dramatization, or movement-based reading activities to reinforce understanding.

**6. Interpersonal Intelligence.** Aids in interpreting character interactions, emotions, and social dynamics in stories or dialogues key for understanding narrative texts.

**7. Intrapersonal Intelligence.** Promotes deeper reflection and personal connection to the text, helping readers relate content to their own experiences and emotions.

**8. Naturalist Intelligence.** Represents the human ability to distinguish among living organisms (such as plants and animals) and to exhibit sensitivity to features of the natural environment, including weather patterns and geological formations.

Reading activates various areas of the brain linked to different intelligences. Armstrong (2003) emphasizes that reading involves more than linguistic decoding it engages multiple intelligences. Smith (2004) adds that reading is a meaning-making process involving visualization, emotion, and social interaction. To improve reading comprehension, teachers should apply diverse strategies aligned with Gardner's multiple intelligences: **Linguistic:** Use word games and storytelling to reinforce grammar and narrative understanding. **Logical-Mathematical:** Apply Socratic questioning to stimulate critical thinking and prediction before reading. **Spatial:** Incorporate mind mapping and visual sketching to deepen vocabulary and conceptual connections. **Musical:** Use mood music to support emotional engagement and rhythm in reading. **Bodily-Kinesthetic:** Encourage dramatization and movement to embody textual meaning. **Naturalist:** Provide texts on environmental topics to build awareness and related vocabulary. **Intrapersonal:** Allow personal reflection through summary writing to foster self-awareness and comprehension. **Interpersonal:** Implement jigsaw reading in groups to promote collaborative understanding.

These strategies are interconnected and can be adapted across intelligences to support diverse learners in reading classes. In general, implementing multiple intelligence strategies is expected to improve students' ability to understand descriptive texts, especially among seventh grade students at SMP Swasta Harvard Medan. Based on the Minimum Mastery Criteria (MMC) for Seventh grade students is 75, meeting

this standard may be difficult for some students. This circumstance inspired the researcher to carry out Classroom Action Research (CAR), which uses numerous intelligence tactics to help pupils become more proficient readers.

The researcher was motivated to carry out a study titled, "improving Students' Reading Comprehension of Descriptive Text Through Multiple Intelligences Strategy at SMP Swasta Harvard Medan."

## Method

Classroom Action Research (CAR) is used in this study to investigate the dynamics of teaching and learning. Finding difficulties during instruction and addressing them with focused interventions and reflective practices including the researcher and instructor is the key goal. This study aims to improve students' ability to understand descriptive texts by utilizing the Multiple Intelligence Strategy. 25 seventh-grade students participated in the study, which was carried out during the 2024–2025 school year at SMP Swasta Harvard Medan, which is situated at Jl. Tuar Indah Blok XI, Martubung, Medan Labuhan District, Medan City, North Sumatra. The four stages of the Kemmis and McTaggart spiral model—planning, action, observation, and reflection—are followed in this study. There are two cycles to the procedure. A second cycle is put into place if the problems found in the first one continue. To better understand the learning context and improve the instructional strategy, a preliminary study is carried out before the intervention. Data is gathered in order to investigate the challenges that teachers and students encounter during learning. The second cycle is started to carry on the improvement efforts if problems are not resolved. Planning, action/implementation, observation, and reflection are the four stages that make up this study.

A preliminary investigation was carried out to examine the obstacles encountered in the classroom during instructional activities, with a specific focus on students' struggles in understanding descriptive texts. Once approval was secured from the English instructor, the researcher engaged with the students and posed inquiries about their experiences in acquiring the English language. The preparation phase encompassed the development of teaching resources, such as lesson outlines, visual supports, classroom monitoring forms, and

student activity sheets. During the first cycle, the activities comprised the arrangement of instructional content, the formulation of lesson designs, the provision of teaching tools, the use of observation records, and the administration of a pre-test to gauge students' baseline reading comprehension abilities. In the second cycle, the researcher analyzed the lesson based on the issues and errors found in the first cycle. framework and pedagogical approaches, created an updated observation guide, and formulated a post-test to measure students' overall improvement.

This cycle aimed to refine the teaching approach and address unresolved issues from the previous cycle. The implementation involved instructional activities to enhance students' reading comprehension through the Multiple Intelligences Strategy in descriptive texts. In this phase, the researcher introduced descriptive texts and demonstrated how multiple intelligences could be applied in reading. Students were guided to read using this strategy while the researcher observed and analyzed their difficulties. Each cycle included administering a pre-test, delivering materials through the Multiple Intelligences approach, guiding students to identify elements of descriptive texts based on their intelligence profiles, and exploring challenges encountered during reading. The development of relevant materials and guidance on applying the Multiple Intelligences Strategy were provided as initial steps.

Teachers also provided guidance and held discussions with students to introduce them to the use of this strategy. Next, students are given additional exercises in the form of reading texts to strengthen their understanding, followed by tests after the exercises to measure learning outcomes. During the learning process, observations are conducted to assess student engagement and achievement.

Every cycle incorporates activities like supervising student engagements, reviewing the outcomes of initial and final assessments, and examining the dynamics of the learning process along with student involvement. Reflective processes provide a feedback system that aids teachers in decision-making and evaluating the effects of prominent issues that surface. In the first cycle, the instructional process was assessed and contemplated, including joint efforts with English teachers to analyze student scores and devise effective strategies for improving reading

comprehension of descriptive texts. Furthermore, a comparative analysis of the observation Cycle I and Cycle II test results and findings were used to assess the progress.

This research incorporated three key methods for data collection: reading comprehension tests, interviews, and observation sheets. The investigator monitored the classroom setting and student engagements during the entire learning experience, documenting the leads to field notes. To gain understanding of how to apply the Multiple Intelligences Strategy for understanding descriptive writings, interviews were conducted with both the English teacher and the students. The inquiries targeted elements such as classroom operations, the environment, student conduct, and reading capabilities. Further tools were utilized to facilitate the research, including photographic and video equipment during the execution and observation periods. These visual captures were regarded as essential elements of the study's data. All of the observations made by the partnering teacher during the teaching and learning sessions were included in the field notes.

Assesment of reading comprehension were employed to measure students' ability to interpret texts effectively. A pre-test was given prior to the introduction of the Multiple Intelligences Strategy to establish students' baseline proficiency in understanding descriptive texts. The post-test was carried out to gauge the strategy's success and gather insights into its use for instructing descriptive texts. This pre-test featured 20 multiple-choice items, where each correct response awarded 5 points and each incorrect one scored 0 points, with the questions aligned to the topics taught in the classroom. In general, the research utilized diverse approaches to data collection, aiming to achieve a thorough insight into the dynamics of teaching and learning.

The investigator examined both qualitative and quantitative data sources. Qualitative evaluation involved monitoring student behaviors during classes and holding interviews before and after applying Classroom Action Research (CAR), a process that encompassed planning, implementation, observation, and review. Quantitative evaluation centered on the reading comprehension exams, each consisting of 20 multiple-choice questions given in each cycle, with student grades calculated on a scale from 0 to 100 based on the accuracy of their answers.

## Result and Discussion

The researcher discovered a consistent improvement in students' ability to comprehend descriptive texts over the course of the study. An analysis of the data obtained from the pre-cycle, Cycle I, and Cycle II stages demonstrated a substantial rise in student achievement scores, indicating notable progress in their reading comprehension skills. The data were gathered from assessments administered at each stage of the research, which consisted of three parts: a pre-cycle test before the intervention, a first post-test after Cycle I, and a second post-test after Cycle II.

### 1. Pre-Test in the Preliminary

During the initial phase of the research, the researcher observed that students continued to face challenges in comprehending English descriptive texts. They had difficulty identifying main ideas, summarizing passages, and interpreting the implied meanings within the texts. The average score on the preliminary test was 52.8, with only 3 out of 25 students achieving a score above the Minimum Mastery Criteria of 75.

Tabel 1. *Students' Pre-Test Scores Percentage*

No	Category	Value range	Frequenc	%
	y		y	
1	Very good	80 - 100	2	8%
2	Good	75 - 79	1	4%
3	Enough	60 - 74	6	24%
4	Less	30 - 59	15	60%
5	Poor	0 - 29	1	4%
Total			25	100%

Based on the table above, the students' reading comprehension of the descriptive text titled "My Family" showed varying results. Out of 25 students, only two (8%) demonstrated a "very good" understanding, and one student (4%) was rated as "good." Most students, however, were still at a lower performance level. Six students (24%) were in the "Enough" category, fifteen students (60%) were classified as "Less," and one student (4%) was in the "Poor" category. These results indicate that although a few students showed strong comprehension of the

descriptive text, the majority still need significant improvement to reach a higher level of reading proficiency.

### 2. First-Post Test in cycle I

The research in Cycle I, the researcher applied the Multiple Intelligences Strategy during the learning process. Following its implementation, the average post-test score rose to 70.2, with 13 out of 25 students (52%) achieving the minimum passing grade. This marked a 33.33% improvement compared to the pre-test results. Nevertheless, 12 students still scored below the required passing mark of 75.

Tabel 2. *Students' First Post-Test Score Percentage in Cycle I*

No	Category	Value range	Frequenc	%
	y		y	
1	Very good	80 - 100	8	32%
2	Good	75 - 79	5	20%
3	Enough	60 - 74	7	28%
4	Less	30 - 59	5	20%
5	Poor	0 - 29	0	%
Total			25	100%

At this stage, the researcher detected multiple challenges that students encountered while interpreting the descriptive text known as "My Family." Students were afforded the opportunity to articulate their obstacles, which encompassed struggles in recognizing main ideas and supporting elements, reduced interest in studying English, and a lack of ability to respond to questions drawn from the text. Upon pinpointing these concerns, the researcher delivered focused assistance and instruction to those students who still faced difficulties in reading comprehension. The findings revealed a noticeable enhancement in students' reading capabilities. In particular, 32% (8 students) attained the excellent rating, 20% (5 students) achieved the good rating, and 28% (7 students) secured the fair rating. Only 20% (5 students) continued to fall into the low rating, with none in the very low rating.

The researcher noted a marked advancement in students' understanding of descriptive texts, as the share of students satisfying the Minimum Mastery Criteria (MMC) climbed from 12% in the pre-test to 52%

following the first cycle. As a result, the researcher opted to move forward with the second post-test cycle.

### 3. Second Post-Test in Cycle II

The researcher enhanced the Multiple Intelligences strategy's implementation in the second cycle. With 24 out of 25 students (96%) meeting the Minimum Mastery Criteria (MMC), the average score on the post-test increased to 87.2. This accomplishment represents a roughly 84.62% improvement over the pre-test results. Additionally, the percentage of students who met the MMC increased significantly, rising from 12% in the pre-test to 52% in the first cycle and finally to 96% in the second cycle.

Table 3. *Percentage of Students' Second Post-Test Results in Cycle II*

No	Category	Value y range	Frequenc y	%
1	Very good	80 - 100	22	88%
2	Good	75 - 79	2	8%
3	Enough	60 - 74	1	4%
4	Less	30 - 59	0	%
5	Poor	0 - 29	0	%
Total			25	100 %

At this stage, the researcher asked students for their feedback on the reading comprehension learning process using the Multiple Intelligences Strategy. At the beginning of the lesson, the researcher created a calm classroom atmosphere and guided the students on how to apply the strategy to a descriptive text titled "*My Best Friends*" during class activities. As a result, the students' average score increased to 87.2%. The students responded favorably and thought the method was appropriate for use in reading courses, according to the researcher's findings. The results also demonstrated that students' reading comprehension abilities had significantly improved. Twenty-two students, or 88% of the total, fell into the "very good" group; two students, or 8%, fell into the "good" category; and one student, or 4%, fell into the "fair" category. No students (0%) were categorized as "low" or "very low". This suggests a significant improvement in reading comprehension, with the percentage of students who met the Minimum

Mastery Criteria (MMC) increasing from 12% in the pre-test, to 52% in the first post-test, and reaching 96% in the second post-test after the implementation of Cycle II.

The researcher discovered that the Multiple Intelligences Strategy greatly improved students' reading comprehension of descriptive literature. Test scores and the percentage of students who fulfilled the Minimum Mastery Criteria (MMC) had both considerably improved by the end of Cycle II. Another way to increase students' interest in reading English texts was to choose a simple topic like "*My Best Friends*." In this study, the Multiple Intelligences Strategy was applied to enhance students' understanding of descriptive literature. The results showed that students first struggled to identify key themes, supporting details, and inferred knowledge. On the pre-test, which had an average score of 52.8, just three out of twenty-five students scored higher than the passing criteria of 75. These difficulties were mainly due to limited vocabulary and low motivation to learn English. Interviews conducted with students and the teacher before implementing the Multiple Intelligences Strategy verified that the majority of students struggled to comprehend reading texts, particularly descriptive English texts.

Many students struggle with English because they have difficulty identifying main ideas, supporting details, and unfamiliar vocabulary. Complex sentence structures can also reduce their interest in learning. Improving reading comprehension requires structured instruction through effective reading strategies, vocabulary development, and text analysis. Additionally, low motivation and negative attitudes toward learning English suggest the necessity of more engaging and effective teaching methods.

After implementing the Multiple Intelligences strategy, interviews with students showed its effectiveness in improving their understanding of descriptive texts. This strategy helped students remember and find key ideas in the text more quickly. Because they were less preoccupied with irrelevant details and more focused on pertinent material, students also reported a notable improvement in their comprehension.

Students reported that the Multiple Intelligence strategy made understanding and remembering the content of the texts they read easier and more enjoyable. They became more

engaged in reading activities because they could participate in tasks that matched their abilities and interests. Furthermore, they felt that their reading comprehension improved significantly.

The application of multiple intelligence techniques to enhance pupils' reading comprehension was also well received by English teachers. They believed that kids are more interested in the texts they read and are better able to comprehend the text's substance when tactics that rely on students' intellect are used to connect activities they enjoy. In conclusion, it has been demonstrated that applying the Multiple Intelligence technique greatly enhances students' comprehension of descriptive literature.

Additionally, during the teaching and learning process, student involvement increased, according to qualitative data. Students' enthusiasm for studying descriptive literature can be increased by using the Multiple Intelligence Strategy. Additionally, kids grow more engaged in their education and teachers get better at managing the classroom. The study's findings suggest that the Multiple Intelligence Strategy can enhance seventh-grade pupils at SMP Swasta Harvard Medan's reading comprehension of descriptive literature.

English texts by using the Multiple Intelligence Strategy. The study was conducted in two cycles, each consisting of four meetings. During the first cycle, the researcher used materials from "My Family" and "My Best Friends" and provided explanations and instructions to improve student comprehension. The study took place from April 21 to May 16, 2025. The results showed that 96% of students met the minimum passing score criteria in the final cycle.

During the pre-test, only 3 students (12%) achieved the passing score, while 22 students (88%) did not. After the Multiple Intelligences strategy was applied in Cycle 1, the number of successful students increased to 13 (52%), and 12 students (48%) were still unsuccessful. In Cycle 2, the results improved significantly, with 24 students (96%) reaching the passing score, and only 1 student (4%) remaining unsuccessful. Observations, interviews, and field notes showed that students became more interested in the learning process and were active in learning English, especially reading comprehension.

The Multiple Intelligence strategy was found to be effective in improving the reading comprehension of Seventh Grade Students at Harvard Private Junior High School in Medan, as evidenced by the significant difference in the average scores obtained in the pre-test, first post-test, and second post-test activities.

## Conclusion

The goal of this study is to improve students' reading comprehension of descriptive

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