



## The Implementation of Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) Approach in Teaching Reading

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### ABSTRACT

The teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach has been increasingly recognized as a powerful strategy to enhance reading comprehension and motivation among students. This article explores the implementation of TaRL in teaching reading at senior high schools, focusing on the experiences of teachers and students in SMA Negeri 3 Makassar. The study aims to identify how teachers implement TaRL, their perceptions of the approach, and its impact on student learning. The research methodology involves a qualitative design, with data collected through interviews and documentation. The findings reveal that TaRL enhances reading comprehension and improves student motivation, but challenges such as teacher training and resource allocation are identified. The study concludes that TaRL is impactful in addressing the diverse needs of students and recommends its adoption in senior high schools.

**Keywords:** *TaRL, Reading, Motivation*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is a fundamental skill that enhances other language abilities and is crucial for academic success. However, many students struggle with reading comprehension, leading to difficulties in mastering English. The Indonesian government's Kurikulum Merdeka emphasizes tailoring instruction to students' abilities, which aligns with the TaRL approach. This article delves into the implementation of TaRL in teaching reading at SMA Negeri 3 Makassar, exploring its impact on student learning and teacher perceptions.

Reading is a complex process that involves creating meaning from text. Effective teaching reading requires appropriate texts and instructional strategies. The TaRL approach, developed by economists Banerjee, Duflo, and Kremer, focuses on tailoring training to each student's learning ability. This approach has been shown to improve learning outcomes significantly, especially in developing nations. In Indonesia, the TaRL approach is part of the Kurikulum Merdeka, which aims to address learning loss by focusing on vital content and student abilities.

Researchers discovered a number of papers with titles identical to this one. The study found that identifying literacy level groups and their impact on pupils' reading abilities is fair and acceptable. The study found a correlation between literacy level groups and reading ability among students. (Oktaviani et al., 2022). Another survey by Busri et al. (2024) based on the findings of this study shows an interesting trend regarding the suitability of teaching materials with the TaRL component with the overall results of student grades at the end of the semester.

The researcher is concerned about problems that teachers and students have in school. Curriculum in school always changes from time to time; before, the learning process focused on curriculum, so teachers ignored students' needs. Curriculum in schools group students based on age, even though age is not a reliable indicator of learning development. Now, the government has adjusted the curriculum to focus more on students' needs and abilities, which is called Merdeka Curriculum. Because each student has different skills and needs, each stage of student development requires a different approach. So, in this curriculum, Teachers should find the best method or approach to improve students' English skills, especially Reading Comprehension. Based on the cases above, the researcher chose this TaRL approach to see the influence of the implementation of TaRL on becoming an effective learning solution to the challenges of different student characteristics. So, the title of this research is "The Implementation of Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) Approach in Teaching Reading in Senior High School."

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

### **2.1. Research Design**

This research used qualitative study involving interviews with teachers and documentation of classroom practices. The research design aimed to explore how teachers implement TaRL, their perceptions of the approach, and its impact on student learning. The study was grounded in the context of the Indonesian government's Kurikulum Merdeka, which emphasizes tailoring instruction to student's abilities

### **2.2. Research Subject**

The subject of research in qualitative research is called an informant, who provides information about the data that the researcher needs for the research being carried out. The subject of this research was the teacher of tenth-grade students at SMAN 3 Makassar. The teacher's name is Hardiyanti, S.Pd., Gr. She graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in English Education from UNM Makassar. After graduating, she joined the Teacher Professional Education Program (PPG). The teacher implemented the TaRL approach to the tenth-grade students at SMAN 3 Makassar. There are ten classes of tenth grade at SMA Negeri 3 Makassar. However, the teacher applied the TaRL approach for tenth six (X-6) grade students at SMAN 3 Makassar. The class consists of 35 students.

### **2.3. Research Instrument**

#### **2.3.1 Interview**

The interview guide will be customized to correspond with the study objectives. Teachers will be questioned regarding their methodologies for implementing teaching at the right level (TaRL), the challenges faced, and their observations of students' engagement and advancement. The researcher used the interview guidelines. This interview is a structured approach to gather detailed insights from teachers about their experiences and perceptions of the teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach. It is crafted based on general qualitative research methods for educational studies and interviews, drawing from best practices in academic research and assessment.

#### **2.3.2 documentation**

The researcher reviewed the provided documentation to gain insights into the strategies, approaches, and resources used for implementing TaRL in teaching reading.

### **2.4. Data Analysis**

The data analysis model that the researcher used is the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014); the components of data analysis are as follows:

#### **2.4.1. Data Collection**

This step involves gathering raw data from various sources. In qualitative research, data collection was iterative and flexible, allowing researchers to adapt and modify their approach as they uncover new insights or face challenges in the field.

#### **2.4.2. Data Display**

Once data is collected, it needs to be organized in a way that makes it easier to understand and analyze. Effective data display helps researchers to see patterns, identify themes, and make comparisons.

#### **2.4.3. Data Condensation**

Data condensation refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data. Data condensation is crucial for making sense of the data and moving from raw data to meaningful insights.

#### **2.4.4. Conclusion and Verification**

In this final step, researchers interpret their findings and verify their conclusions. Verification ensures that the conclusions are credible, trustworthy, and accurately reflect the data.

## **3. FINDINGS**

The findings of the study reveal that the implementation of TaRL enhances reading comprehension and improves student motivation. Teachers reported that the approach helped them tailor instruction to the diverse needs of their students, leading to better learning outcomes. However, challenges such as teacher training and resource allocation were identified as obstacles to the effective implementation of TaRL.

### 3.1. The Implementation of Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach in teaching reading

The researcher found the implementation of the teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach in teaching reading in English class had several aspects as follows:

#### 3.1.1. Diagnostic Assessment

Teachers conducted diagnostic exams to categorize students into different competency levels: good, enough, and low. This categorization enabled the tailoring of instruction to meet the specific needs of each student group. According to the interview, the teacher gave students a diagnostic assessment to measure their reading ability. The diagnostic assessment consisted of 10 questions. The test given to students was descriptive text. The teacher uses the diagnostic assessment as an assessment test in applied teaching at the right level (TaRL) approach in teaching reading before grouping students based on their reading abilities. The teacher used Google Forms to make it easy to assess. From the test, the teacher found the result that 5 students got 90 points, 21 students got 80 points, 4 students got 7 points, 1 student got 50 points, and 4 students got 40 points.

#### 3.1.2. Group Differentiation

Based on the diagnostic results, students were grouped according to their reading abilities. Teachers then customized reading materials and activities appropriate to each group's proficiency level. Based on the interview, the teacher classified students into high-level students who got 90 scores, average-level students who got 80 scores, and low-level students who got <70 scores. It found that there were 5 students at the high level, 21 students at the average level, and 9 students at the low level.

#### 3.1.3. Instructional adaptations

Teachers adjusted their teaching strategies, focusing on the specific needs of each group. Based on the interview, the teacher explained giving material in implementing the teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach.

Extract 1:

*"... Descriptive text; saya kasi materi mendeskripsikan artis/atlit favorite atau idola mereka. Siswa berkemampuan tinggi saya suruh presentasi mendeskripsikan 3 paragraf, sedang 2 paragraf, rendah 1 paragraf"* (... Descriptive text; I give them material to describe their favorite artist/athlete or idol I ask students with high-ability students to present describing 3 paragraphs, average 2 paragraphs, low 1 paragraph) (Interview, 24 June 2024 )

### 3.2. Teachers' Perception on Implementing of Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) Approach in Teaching Reading in Senior High School

Paragraph Regarding the teacher's perception, the teacher understands that teaching at the right level (TaRL) is a learning approach that refers to the level of achievement or ability of students. The focus is to help children meet their needs in the learning process, especially in reading comprehension.

#### 3.2.1. Teachers' perception of the effectiveness of the TaRL approach in addressing diverse student needs.

Extract 2:

*"... Saya yakin pendekatan TaRL sangat efektif dalam menangani berbagai kebutuhan siswa. Dengan mengelompokkan siswa berdasarkan tingkat kemampuan membaca mereka, saya dapat menyesuaikan materi saya untuk memenuhi kebutuhan spesifik masing-masing kelompok. TaRL ini telah menghasilkan peningkatan dalam pemahaman membaca dan peningkatan keterlibatan siswa"* (...I believe the TaRL approach is very effective in addressing diverse student needs. By grouping students based on their reading levels, I can tailor my instruction to meet each group's specific needs. This has led to noticeable improvements in reading comprehension and increased student engagement) (Interview, 24 June 2024)

#### 3.2.2. Benefit of Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach in teaching reading

Extract 3:

*"...Aspek TaRL yang paling bermanfaat bagi siswa saya adalah materi yang dapat disesuaikan. Dengan mengelompokkan siswa menurut tingkat kemampuan membaca mereka, setiap siswa menerima materi dan aktivitas yang sesuai dengan kemampuan mereka. Pendekatan TaRL ini membantu siswa berkembang sesuai kemampuan mereka sendiri dan membuat mereka lebih terlibat dan termotivasi. Pendekatan ini juga memungkinkan siswa yang kesulitan dalam belajar, mendapatkan dukungan yang mereka butuhkan. dan siswa yang lebih pintar membantu siswa yang kesusahan."* (...The most beneficial aspect of TaRL for my students is the tailored instruction. By grouping students according to their reading levels, each student

receives materials and activities that match their abilities. This TaRL approach helps students improve at their own ability and keeps them more engaged and motivated. It also allows struggling students to get the support they need while excellent students help student from struggling) (Interview, 24 June 2024)

### 3.2.3. Challenges while implementing Teaching at the right level (TaRL)

Extract 4:

*"... Salah satu tantangan yang saya hadapi adalah mengelola berbagai kelompok secara bersamaan. Sulit untuk memberikan perhatian yang cukup kepada setiap kelompok sambil memastikan seluruh kelas tetap tertib. Masalah lainnya adalah waktu tambahan yang dibutuhkan untuk penilaian awal dan membuat rencana pelajaran yang disesuaikan. Selain itu, beberapa siswa kadang tidak setuju ditempatkan di kelompok tingkat yang lebih rendah, yang membutuhkan kesabaran untuk membuat mereka tetap termotivasi"* (...One of the challenges I face is managing multiple groups at once. It is difficult to give each group enough attention while keeping the class organized. Another issue is the extra time required for initial assessments and creating customized lesson plans. In addition, some students sometimes do not agree to being placed in lower-level groups, which requires patience to keep them motivated) (Interview, 24 June 2024)

### 3.2.4. Advantages of Implementing Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach

Extract 5:

*"... Ya, saya menerima feedback dari siswa tentang pendekatan TaRL. Banyak siswa menyukai perhatian yang diberikan dan materi yang sesuai dengan tingkat membaca mereka, yang menurut mereka lebih menarik dan tidak membuat frustrasi. Beberapa siswa di kelompok yang lebih rendah awalnya merasa kecewa, tetapi seiring berjalannya waktu, mereka menjadi lebih termotivasi karena mereka mulai melihat peningkatan dalam kemampuan membaca mereka. Sejauh ini, feedback positif yang saya terima yaitu siswa merasa bahwa materi yang disesuaikan dengan kemampuan mereka membantu mereka belajar lebih baik"* (Yes, I have received feedback from students about the TaRL approach. Many students like the attention given and the materials that are tailored to their reading level, which they find more engaging and less frustrating. Some students in the lower groups were initially disappointed, but over time, they became more motivated as they began to see improvements in their reading skills. So far, the feedback I have received is positive, with students feeling that the materials that are tailored to their abilities help them learn better) (Interview, 24 June 2024)

### 3.2.5. Suggestion of implementing of the Teaching at the right level (TaRL) approach

Extract 6:

*"... Berdasarkan pengalaman saya, saya merekomendasikan beberapa masukan pada pendekatan TaRL. Pertama, menyediakan lebih banyak sumber daya dan fasilitas bagi guru untuk mempermudah penilaian diagnostik dan perencanaan pelajaran akan sangat membantu. Selain itu, memasukkan lebih banyak kesempatan pengembangan profesional dapat mendukung guru dalam mengelola berbagai kelompok siswa secara efektif. Mungkin juga bermanfaat untuk menyertakan lebih banyak masukan atau feedback dari siswa untuk terus membuat pembaharuan dalam menyesuaikan pendekatan berdasarkan kebutuhan mereka. Terakhir, memastikan bahwa siswa memahami tujuan dan manfaat pendekatan TaRL agar membantu mengurangi penolakan awal atau ketidaksetujuan pengelompokan khususnya bagi siswa yang memiliki kemampuan rendah dan meningkatkan keterlibatan secara keseluruhan"* (Based on my experience, I would recommend several suggestions for the TaRL approach. First, providing more resources and facilities for teachers to facilitate diagnostic assessments and lesson planning would be helpful. Additionally, including more professional development opportunities could support teachers in managing diverse groups of students effectively. It may also be helpful to include more input or feedback from students to continually make improvements in adapting the approach to their needs. Finally, ensuring that students understand the purpose and benefits of the TaRL approach could help reduce initial resistance or disapproval of grouping, especially for lower-ability students, and increase overall engagement) (Interview, 24 June 2024)

## 3.3. The Impact on Implementing Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) Approach in Teaching Reading

### 3.3.1. Improved Learning Outcomes

The impact of TaRL on improved learning outcomes underscores its effectiveness in creating a more responsive and supportive educational environment.

Extract 7:

*"...Menurut saya, pendekatan TaRL meningkatkan kemampuan reading skill siswa secara signifikan. Dengan mengelompokkan siswa berdasarkan tingkat kemampuan reading mereka, pendekatan ini memungkinkan setiap siswa untuk mengerjakan materi yang sesuai dengan kemampuan mereka. Siswa yang dulu mengalami kesulitan dapat mengalami kemajuan karena mereka mengerjakan teks yang sesuai dengan kemampuan mereka. Bahkan siswa dengan tingkat yang tinggi memperoleh manfaat dengan mendapatkan materi yang lebih menantang. intinya, pendekatan ini telah membantu semua siswa memahami kemampuan reading mereka dengan lebih baik dan membuat pembelajaran menjadi lebih efektif. Misalnya, seorang siswa yang kesulitan dalam basic reading sudah*

dapat memahami dan membuat teks pendek dengan lebih baik setelah dikelompokkan pada tingkat rendah sesuai kemampuan mereka. Siswa lain yang di tingkat tinggi mengerjakan teks yang lebih menantang dan meningkatkan kemampuan mereka untuk membahas ide-ide yang lebih rumit. Ini menunjukkan bahwa pendekatan TaRL membantu siswa membuat peningkatan dengan menyesuaikan materi reading berdasarkan tingkat kemampuan mereka masing-masing” (...The TaRL approach significantly improved students' reading skills. By grouping students based on their reading ability level, this approach allowed each student to work on material that was at their level of ability. Students who previously struggled were able to make progress because they were working on texts that were at their level of ability. Even students at higher levels benefited from being exposed to more challenging material. In essence, this approach helped all students gain a better understanding of their reading skills and made learning more effective. For example, a student who struggled with basic reading was able to comprehend and create short texts better after being grouped at a lower level according to their ability. Other students at a higher level worked on more challenging texts and improved their ability to discuss more complex ideas. This shows that the TaRL approach helps students make progress by tailoring reading materials to their individual ability levels) (Interview, 24 June 2024)

The teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach has proven to be highly effective in fostering student progress by carefully aligning reading materials with each student's current ability level

### 3.3.2. Increased Students' Engagement

The teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach significantly enhances student engagement by aligning instruction with each learner's current abilities and needs. By providing relevant and appropriately challenging material, TaRL creates a more engaging and interactive learning environment.

Extract 8:

“...Pendekatan TaRL ini sangat berpengaruh dalam meningkatkan keterlibatan dan motivasi siswa. Dengan menyesuaikan materi reading dengan tingkat kemampuan setiap siswa, mereka merasa tugas yang diberikan menarik dan mudah dicerna oleh mereka. maka dari itu, ini membuat siswa lebih bersemangat untuk berpartisipasi dalam reading activity karena mereka melihat peningkatan mereka dan merasa lebih percaya diri. dan juga, siswa lebih antusias dalam mengikuti pelajaran reading karena materinya sesuai dengan tingkat kemampuan mereka. Mereka lebih percaya diri dan lebih menikmati reading activity di kelas karena sesuai dengan kemampuan mereka” (...This TaRL approach is very influential in increasing student engagement and motivation. By adjusting the reading material to each student's ability level, they find the tasks given interesting and easy for them to digest. Therefore, this makes students more enthusiastic to participate in reading activities because they see their improvement and feel more confident. and also, students are more enthusiastic in following reading lessons because the material is in accordance with their ability level. They are more confident and enjoy reading activities in class because they are in accordance with their abilities) (Interview, 24 June 2024)

The TaRL approach plays a crucial role in enhancing student engagement and motivation by providing reading materials that align with each student's ability level. This tailored approach not only makes reading tasks more accessible and enjoyable but also empowers students to participate more actively and confidently in their learning journey. As students experience success and improvement in their reading skills, their enthusiasm for reading grows, creating a more dynamic and positive classroom atmosphere.

## 4. DISCUSSION

The discussions of the research deal with the researcher's interpretation of the findings. Moreover, the data gained from interviews with the teacher about implementing the teaching at the right level (TaRL) approach in teaching reading was described.

### 4.1. The Implementation of Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) Approach in Teaching Reading

The implementation of the TaRL approach at SMA Negeri 3 Makassar involved a structured process aimed at addressing the diverse reading abilities of tenth-grade students. The approach was methodically divided into three main components: diagnostic assessments, group differentiation, and instructional adaptations. The teacher utilized diagnostic exams to categorize students into three competency levels: high, average, and low. This initial step was crucial for understanding the specific needs of each student, enabling tailored instruction that met their reading abilities. The use of tools like Google Forms for these assessments streamlined the process, making it easier to evaluate and group students. Based on the diagnostic results, students were grouped according to their reading abilities. This step ensured that each student received materials and activities appropriate for their proficiency level. Advanced students were challenged with complex texts, while those with lower proficiency levels were given foundational support. The teacher adapted their teaching strategies to focus on the specific needs of each group. The teacher uses descriptive text material in teaching reading. This differentiation in instruction was key to ensuring that all students could progress at their own pace and ability level. Activities varied from describing a person, event, place, or something to presenting these descriptions, further enhancing their reading and comprehension skills. Overall, the implementation of the TaRL approach was systematic and thorough, ensuring that students received the appropriate level of support and challenge based on their reading abilities. This method not only improved their



reading skills but also boosted their confidence and engagement in reading activities.

#### 4.2. Teacher's Perception of the Implementation of TaRL

First, the teacher's perception of the TaRL approach was overwhelmingly positive, highlighting its effectiveness in addressing diverse student needs. The ability to tailor instruction to individual reading levels was seen as a significant benefit, leading to noticeable improvements in reading comprehension and student engagement. Second, the teacher found the TaRL approach to be highly effective, as it allowed for customized instruction that met the specific needs of each student group. This led to improvements in reading comprehension and increased student engagement. Third, the most beneficial aspect identified was the tailored instruction. Students received materials and activities that matched their abilities, helping them to improve at their own pace. This customization kept students engaged and motivated, as they could see their progress and felt more confident in their abilities. Fourth, despite its benefits, the TaRL approach also presented challenges. Managing multiple groups simultaneously and providing sufficient attention to each group were significant hurdles.

Additionally, the extra time required for initial assessments and lesson planning, as well as student resistance to being placed in lower-level groups, were noted as difficulties. Fifth, feedback from students was generally positive. They appreciated the tailored materials and felt more engaged and less frustrated. Although some lower-level students initially resisted, they became more motivated as they saw improvements in their reading skills. Lastly, the teacher suggested providing more resources and facilities to facilitate diagnostic assessments and lesson planning. Professional development opportunities for managing diverse groups effectively and incorporating more student feedback were also recommended. Ensuring that students understood the purpose and benefits of the TaRL approach was highlighted as a way to reduce resistance and increase engagement.

#### 4.3. The Impact on Implementing of Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) Approach in Teaching Reading

Based on the interview, the impact of the TaRL approach on students' reading skills and engagement was significant. It can improve learning outcomes and increase students' engagement. The tailored instruction based on students' reading levels led to noticeable improvements in their reading skills. Students at lower levels were able to make progress with appropriate materials, while advanced students benefited from more challenging texts. This customization helped all students gain a better understanding of their reading abilities and made learning more effective. The TaRL approach significantly boosted student engagement and motivation. Tailoring reading materials to each student's ability level made tasks more interesting and digestible. This led to increased enthusiasm and confidence, as students could see their progress and felt more capable in their reading activities. Overall, the implementation of the TaRL approach of tenth-grade students at SMA Negeri 3 Makassar had a positive impact on both student learning outcomes and engagement. The systematic process of assessing, grouping, and adapting instruction to individual needs proved effective in improving reading skills and motivating students. The teacher's positive perception and commitment to the approach further emphasize its success and potential for continued use.

### 5. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion in the previous chapter, the researcher concluded that implementing the teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach in teaching reading to tenth-grade students at SMA Negeri Makassar improves students' reading comprehension and engagement. Firstly, the TaRL approach has been effectively implemented, following a structured process that includes diagnostic assessments, group differentiation, and instructional adaptations. This method has enabled teachers to tailor instruction to the specific needs and abilities of students. The teacher's perception of the TaRL approach is overwhelmingly positive. The ability to customize instruction according to students' reading levels has led to noticeable improvements in their reading skills. Despite challenges such as managing multiple groups and the extra time required for assessments and planning, the overall benefits, including increased student motivation and engagement, outweigh these difficulties. Feedback from students further supports the effectiveness of the TaRL approach. Students appreciate the tailored materials and feel more confident and engaged in their reading activities. Even students initially resistant to being placed in lower-level groups have shown improved motivation and skills over time. The impact of the TaRL approach on students' learning outcomes is significant. By addressing the diverse reading abilities of students, the approach has facilitated better understanding and enjoyment of reading, thereby enhancing overall academic performance.

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