



## Reading to Learn (R2L) Pedagogy: Teaching Reading Comprehension to a Young English Language Learner

### *Reading to Learn (R2L) Pedagogy: Mengajarkan Pemahaman Membaca Kepada Pembelajar Bahasa Inggris Usia Dini*

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#### Abstract

Reading to Learn (R2L) pedagogy is a child-friendly approach that aims to minimize the literacy gap among learners. R2L pedagogy is applicable at every level of education with the use of various text types. Considering many significant aspects of R2L, this approach could be used in Indonesia to help learners fulfilling the high demand of *Kurikulum Merdeka* at primary and junior high school levels. However, only little research using R2L pedagogy in Indonesian primary school contexts was found. Therefore, this research is intended to discover how R2L pedagogy supports a young English language learners' reading comprehension. Using a case study methodology, the researcher implemented to activities, namely (1) preparing for reading and (2) detailed reading phase adapted from Rose and Martin (2012). Moreover, the researcher used videotapes observation and the learners' sample works in collecting the data. In analyzing the data, the researcher used thematic analysis by Creswell and Creswell (2018) and categorized the data into selected codes and themes which is expected to show how R2L pedagogy supports a young English language learners' reading comprehension.

**Keywords:** EFL classroom; *Kurikulum Merdeka*; Reading to Learn (R2L) pedagogy; reading comprehension; young learners

#### Abstrak

*Reading to Learn (R2L)* adalah pendekatan pedagogi ramah anak yang bertujuan untuk meminimalisir kesenjangan literasi antar peserta didik. Pendekatan pedagogi R2L dapat diterapkan di setiap jenjang pendidikan dengan penggunaan berbagai jenis teks. Mengingat banyak aspek penting dari R2L, pendekatan ini dapat digunakan di Indonesia untuk membantu siswa memenuhi tuntutan Kurikulum Merdeka yang tinggi di jenjang Sekolah Dasar dan Sekolah Menengah Pertama. Namun, penelitian yang menggunakan pendekatan pedagogi R2L di sekolah dasar, khususnya di Indonesia, masih sedikit ditemukan. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini dimaksudkan untuk mengetahui bagaimana pendekatan pedagogi R2L mendukung pemahaman membaca pembelajar bahasa Inggris usia dini. Dengan menggunakan metodologi studi kasus, peneliti menerapkan dua kegiatan, yaitu (1) *preparing for reading* dan (2) *detailed reading* yang diadaptasi dari Rose dan Martin (2012). Selain itu, peneliti menggunakan observasi kelas dan contoh karya siswa dalam mengumpulkan data. Dalam menganalisis data, peneliti menggunakan analisis tematik oleh Creswell dan Creswell (2018) dan mengategorikan data ke dalam kode dan tema terpilih yang diharapkan dapat menunjukkan bagaimana pendekatan pedagogi R2L mendukung pemahaman membaca pembelajar bahasa Inggris usia dini.

**Kata kunci:** EFL classroom; Kurikulum Medeka; *Reading to Learn (R2L) pedagogy*; pemahaman membaca; pembelajar usia dini

#### 1. Introduction

Reading comprehension is significant in every human's life. Through reading, students can deepen their understanding of one specific topic, develop analytical and critical thinking

skills, and gain new language structure as well as vocabulary (Think Student, 2022; Grand Canyon University, 2020). These skills are very beneficial in academic life since students should interact with the text by making predictions, asking some critical questions, analyzing the new information, and summarizing (Academic English UK, 2022).

The importance of reading comprehension is the priority of the Indonesian government. As of today, the Indonesian government is implementing *Kurikulum Merdeka*, in which the English language is one of the subjects taught to Grade 1 to Grade 12. Listening, speaking, reading, viewing, writing, and presenting various kinds of text types are the main focus of English learning (Aditomo, 2022). Especially in terms of reading skills, learners are hoped to have the ability to understand, use, and reflect a text based on its aim in order to develop their knowledge and potential (Aditomo, 2022). Therefore, with the knowledge they gain, they are expected to be a good part of the society who can do real-life action to solve specific problems.

However, to meet the Indonesian demands is not an easy task, especially in a foreign language context where students only receive a little exposure to the targeted language (Sunggingwati & Nguyen, 2013). Students need the ability not only to recognize and decode the single words written in the text (Nation, 2005; Mih & Mih, 2008) but also the ability to understand, use, reflect, and interpret every text that they read (Hamra & Syatriana, 2010). Specifically, in processing the text, students must go through lower-level and higher-level processes which can be reflected into three different levels - literal, inferential, and interpretive. On literal levels, students are expected to find the meaning exactly in the text, such as finding the main ideas of each paragraph and organizing the sequence of events that occurred in the text (NSW Government, 2021; Rose & Martin, 2019). As far as an inferential level is concerned, students must make connections between the words they are reading with other words and text elements such as illustrations, sentences, metaphors, similes, or idioms (Rose & Martin, 2019). At the interpretive level, students must connect the elements of the text with their own experience, attitudes, or knowledge of the topic (Rose & Martin, 2019).

Looking at the long journey of the reading process, it is no wonder that EFL students still face some barriers in comprehending the text. The problems revolve around the lack of vocabulary (Hamra & Syatriana, 2010; Rizqon, Andreani, & Astuti, 2021), decoding skills and pronouncing the English words (Suryanto, 2017). In other words, they are failing to process the text even in the lower comprehension process where they should recall the main points and find the literal meaning of the text (Kendeou, van den Broek, Helder, & Karlsson, 2014). The barriers happen due to a lack of exposure to English (Sunggingwati & Nguyen, 2013) which results in less motivation for students to read and comprehend the English text (Nanda & Azmi, 2020; Rombot, Boeriswati, & Suparman, 2020; Sunggingwati & Nguyen, 2013). Therefore, the need to simplify the comprehension process through teaching approaches is the demand in today's EFL young learners' classroom.

Studies have shown that a number of approaches can be used to improve EFL student reading comprehension, such as Interactive Model of Teaching Reading Comprehension (IMTRC) (e.g., Hamra & Syatriana, 2010), Fix Up Strategy (FUS) (e.g., Muhassin, Annisa, & Hidayati, 2021), Question and Answer Relation (QAR) (e.g., Raphael & Au, 2005; Chien, 2013), and blended learning approach (e.g., Rombot et al., 2020). In the meantime, Genre Based Approach (GBA) (e.g., Montero-Arévalo, 2019; Pham & Bui, 2021; Angraini & Rozimela, 2020) and Reading to Learn (R2L) pedagogy (e.g., Rose & Martin, 2012; Vencesla, 2021; Damayanti, 2017;

Becerra, Herazo, Garcia, Sagre, & Diaz, 2020; Mataka, Mukurunge, & Bhila, 2020; Millin & Millin, 2018; Millin, Millin, & Pearce, 2020; Bogale, 2018) are proven as effective approaches in teaching both writing and reading skills. All mentioned approaches improve EFL students' ability in understanding, interpreting, and reflecting the text as well as closing the literacy gap (Hamra & Syatriana, 2010; Raphael & Au, 2005; Rose & Martin, 2012; Daniarti, Taufiq, R., & Sunaryo, 2020; Phichiensathien, 2018; Millin et al., 2020; Millin & Millin, 2018).

Among all reading comprehension approaches, Reading to Learn (henceforth R2L) pedagogy that was developed from Genre-based Approach (GBA) is considered as the appropriate approach in motivating and improving reading comprehension skills. R2L pedagogy offers a learning experience that scaffolds children to become independent learners (Damayanti, 2017; Becerra et al., 2020) by chunking the complex academic literacy into smaller forms in which can be followed by any levels of students (Millin et al., 2020; Millin & Millin, 2018). This scaffolding can be reflected in a three-level cycle which supports students to comprehend the text and deconstruct the model text. Students will also gain the knowledge of meanings, wordings, and spelling from the cycle (Rose & Martin, 2012) as well as achieve detailed explanations in terms of content, structure, and language features as well as language skills (Yamac & Ulusoy, 2016; Becerra et al., 2020; Shum, Gao, & Ki, 2016; Millin & Millin, 2018).

As Becerra et al. (2020) found, R2L pedagogy helped EFL students improve the results of reading tasks. R2L pedagogy allows students to have a better understanding toward the explanation text through step-by-step summarizing and detailed reading. These strategies helped students to focus on lexicogrammar, facilitated students in identifying key features of explanation text, and motivated them to read independently. Moreover, the research revealed that the Preparing for Reading and Detailed Reading phases play a significant role in helping students be independent readers. Other research also showed that using genre-based approach and reading to learn pedagogy is effective in making them to easily understand the text, solving their difficulties in differentiating language functions, comprehend the text, mastering lexical items, summarizing the text, and creating more cohesive and coherent texts (Daniarti et al., 2019; Ariyanfar & Mitchell, 2020; Phirunkhana & Phichiensathien, 2018; Millin et al., 2020; Millin & Millin, 2018). These results were gained because of building knowledge of the field, preparing for reading, and detailed reading phases in which they gained the necessary knowledge (Mauludin, 2020; Menco-Haeckermann, 2021; Becerra et al., 2020).

Despite the successful development and implementation in Sydney school, Australia (Rose & Martin, 2012) and in many other contexts, research that utilized R2L pedagogy in elementary school in Indonesia is still little known. Hence, to fill the gap, this study proposed a research question on how R2L pedagogy supports a young English language learner named Tareq (pseudonym) reading comprehension.

## **2. Method**

This study employed a qualitative case study. The allowance of exploring an in-depth process, event, or activities of an individual or group (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) in a natural contemporary phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018; Creswell, 2003) made a case study design suitable for this study. Specifically, a single case study was employed considering a single case that happened during one specific period of time and needed to be looked at further. The case relied on one English language learner who need an effective strategy to help him comprehend English texts. Therefore, considering the need, this study used a single case

study that explored the support of R2L pedagogy for a young English language learner reading comprehension.

In this study, the researcher was a participant researcher who acted as the teacher and the researcher to in-depth explore the process of R2L pedagogy in supporting a young English language learner reading comprehension using intensive reading.

The participant of this study was Tareq (pseudonym), an English language learner aged 12 years old in Bandung, Indonesia. He was a sixth grader when he participated in this research and had learned English for as long as six months through private lessons. He learned English with the aim to prepare himself for the future demands in junior high school which is arguably high for the beginner. As stated in *Kurikulum Merdeka*, in terms of reading, learners in phase D, that is seventh, eighth, and ninth graders should be able to independently read, comprehend, and evaluate the narrative, descriptive, procedure, advertisement, or authentic texts (Kepala Balitbang dan Perbukuan, 2021). Yet, even though he had learned English previously, he still experienced reading comprehension problems such as the difficulty in decoding the English words, understanding one specific sentence without being translated by the teacher, and producing a whole English sentence. The problem happened probably due to insufficient exposure to English as it is a foreign language in Indonesia. Therefore, he had little chance to speak, listen, or even read outside the lesson, which affects his ability in producing, pronouncing, as well as understanding English words. In other words, he still needed the reading method that supported the development of his reading comprehension ability.

To help the participant and to answer the research question, the lesson plan was constructed based on Tareq abilities, characteristics, and demands. As his future demands were to read independently, comprehend, and evaluate the narrative, descriptive, procedure, advertisement, or authentic text (Kepala Balitbang dan Perbukuan, 2021), the descriptive text entitled “A Climate in Chaos” was used throughout this research. This text was used to raise the learner’s awareness toward one of the environmental issues in Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, n.d). Furthermore, this study utilized two phases of R2L pedagogy namely preparing for reading and detailed reading phases due to their targeted skill, which was reading comprehension.

Data was collected for as long as three weeks with five meetings in total using a classroom observation and the learners sample works. Various data collections were utilized to validate the data that were gained during the research by comparing and re-checking the data.

In analyzing the data, this study employed a thematic analysis process by Creswell and Creswell (2018). This process of data analysis was appropriate for this research as it allowed us to picture the result thoroughly. The overall data analysis processes can be seen in Figure 1.

Organizing and preparing data for analysis was the first step with the process of filling out the observational field notes, writing the learner's answers on pre- and post-reading comprehension, and collecting all worksheets done by the learner. After organizing the data, observational field notes, pre- and post-reading comprehension, as well as worksheets were read as an attempt to find the main ideas that occurred during the lesson. Furthermore, codes were made after reading all data as the third process. There were thirteen codes in total used in this research for analyzing all data from classroom observation and seven codes for the worksheets. Following the coding process, the next process was generating themes. In this process,

the four themes were made up based on the codes to simplify the process of interpreting data. The themes used in this research could be supported by diverse quotations and specific evidence based on the codes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). They are presented in Table 1.

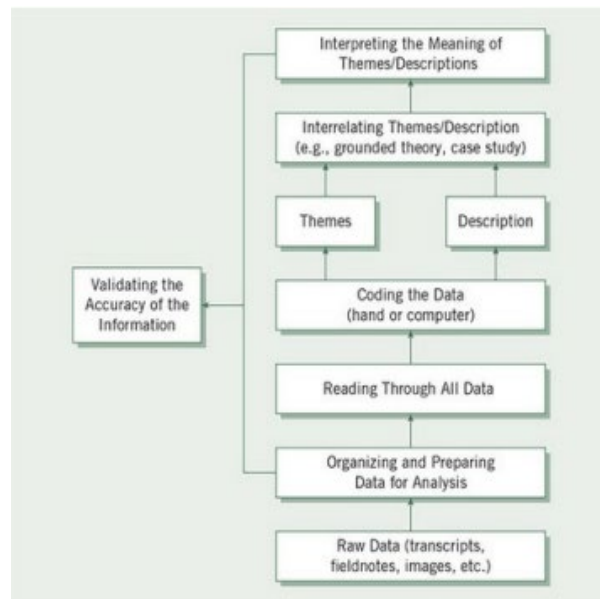


Figure 1. Thematic Analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 269)

As the final step, the meaning of themes and codes were interpreted. In this research, the interpretation revolved around how R2L pedagogy supported the participant’s comprehension after reading the text with the help of some evidence based on the themes and codes. The evidence in both Indonesian and English language was represented on Table 1 with the use of gloss or translation for every statement that was produced in Indonesian both by the teacher and Tareq.

Table 1. List of codes and themes

Codes	Themes
Decoding the words (DW) Knowing the meaning (KM) Differentiating the words (DW) Finding the exact meaning on the text (FeM)	Literal comprehension abilities
Finding the main idea (FMi) Finding the supporting idea (FSi) Relating one paragraph with another text elements (RP)	Inferential comprehension abilities
Interpreting the idea based on his background knowledge (II) Interpreting what the writer want to say through the text (IW)	Interpretive comprehension abilities
Mixing the language (MxL) Switching the language (SwL) Chunking (Ch) Problem faced by the learner (Pfl)	The learner’s problem and R2L strategy

### 3. Result and Discussion

This study was conducted to see how R2L pedagogy supports a young English language learner reading comprehension. It was found that Tareq’s ability in comprehending the text

seemed to be supported by preparing for reading and detailed reading phase. Specifically, his comprehension was supported by a good amount of scaffolding done by the teacher, which were provided throughout the R2L pedagogy phases.

The occurrence of literal, inferential, and interpretive comprehension in both preparing for reading and detailed reading phase was because of a good amount of scaffolding done by the teacher. As a step-by-step summary, phases of reading exchange, mixing the language, switching the language, emphasizing the key wordings, and chunking the knowledge and questions support the participant’s comprehension in any level.

This step-by-step summary aims to give a brief knowledge of the text and allows the participant to unfold the content of the text and correlate his background knowledge into new knowledge (Rose & Martin, 2012).

**Table 2. Example of A Step-by-Step Summary Strategy**

Speakers	Text	Gloss	Phases of reading exchange
Teacher	Plants also need to do something to stay alive. They also breathe but are different from us. They are taking in carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen.		Prepare

The knowledge that Tareq gained through a step-by-step summary was the foundation to understand the general knowledge of the text. Therefore, it was very beneficial in developing Tareq’s literal, inferential, and interpretive comprehension.

To strengthen Tareq’s comprehension, phases of reading exchange that were developed based on Systemic Functional Linguistics by Halliday in the 1960s including prepare, focus, identify, affirm, and elaborate were also employed.

**Table 3. Example of Tareq's problem**

Speakers	Text	Gloss	Phases of reading exchange
Teacher	Why should we eat more vegetables?		Focus
Tareq	<i>Gatahu kak</i>	I don’t know	Identify
Teacher	Let’s look at this picture (showed a related picture), do you still remember what happens here?		Elaborate Focus
Tareq	<i>Ada peternakan sapi dan</i> greenhouse gasses <i>nya bertambah</i>	There is a cow farm and the greenhouse gasses are increasing.	Identify
Teacher	Very good. If we eat lots of meat, we create more greenhouse gasses.		Elaborate

Phases of reading exchange from R2L pedagogy allowed the teacher to give beneficial scaffolding for the learner to deeply unfold the text as well as access linguistic features of the text (Rose, 2017; Becerra et al., 2020). As a result, the access of seeing the way language was used boosted Tareq’s confidence in speaking English and broadened his knowledge, proven by his ability to produce deeper answers on the same question after passing the detailed reading phase.

**Table 4. First example of Tareq answering in English**

Speakers	Text	Gloss	Phases of reading exchange
Teacher	<i>Apa yang harus kita lakukan</i> to stop our earth overheating? What should we do to stop our earth overheating?	What should we do to stop our earth overheating?	Focus
Student	We need to stop creating greenhouse gasses		Identify

Moreover, Tareq’s ability in speaking English as the result of reading exchange phases from R2L pedagogy is represented through the conversation below.

**Table 5. Second example of Tareq answering in English**

Speakers	Text	Gloss	Phases of reading exchange
Teacher	The paragraph is talking about power or energy and how we can reduce greenhouse gasses by turning off the energy. Let’s read the first sentence. So, where does the energy come from?		Prepare Direct Focus
Tareq	Burning greenhouse gasses		Identify
Teacher	That’s right. What happens when we always turn on the energy? <i>Apa yang terjadi kalau kita selalu menyalakan lampu?</i>	What happens when we always turn on the energy?	Affirm Focus
Tareq	We produce so many harmful gasses		Identify
Teacher	Very good. We release more greenhouse gasses to the sky if we always turn on the energy.		Affirm Elaborate

The excerpt showed that in understanding one sentence, Tareq was constantly guided by first preparing him through giving a brief explanation on the paragraph. Then, both the teacher and himself read along the targeted sentence to give him an exposure to English pronunciation of words. After reading the sentence, the teacher chunked the information so that Tareq could understand the knowledge easily. Furthermore, the teacher also elaborated Tareq’s answer to explain further ideas in order to emphasize the knowledge.

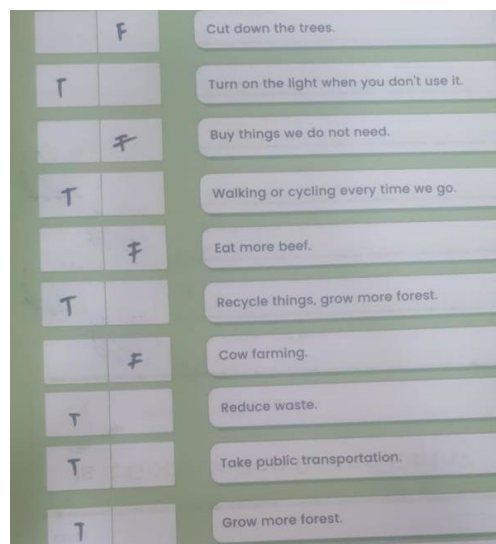
Table 5 also showed the scaffolding in the form of elaborating, emphasizing, mixing, and switching the language as a form of help for Tareq to decode, understand, differentiate the words, evaluate, and correlate the elements of the text. The strategies used were similar to the study conducted by Vencesla (2021) where he also explained the text in both Indonesian and English. Vencesla (2021) decided to use two languages in teaching exposition text considering the participants’ condition in which they struggled in comprehending both the text and the teacher’s explanation. The strategy turned out to be effective in helping the learner comprehend the text (Vencesla, 2021), activate his background knowledge, and absorb the needed knowledge throughout the phase.

As for this present study, the amount of scaffolding mentioned before supported Tareq who sometimes faced an inferential and interpretive comprehension problem during the preparing for reading phase.

**Table 6. Example of Tareq's problem**

Speakers	Text	Gloss	Phases of reading exchange
Teacher	Why should we eat more vegetables?		Focus
Tareq	<i>Gatahu kak</i>	I don't know	Identify
Teacher	Let's look at this picture (showed a related picture), do you still remember what happens here?		Elaborate Focus
Tareq	<i>Ada peternakan sapi dan greenhouse gasses nya bertambah</i>	There is a cow farm and the greenhouse gasses are increasing.	Identify
Teacher	Very good. If we eat lots of meat, we create more greenhouse gasses.		Elaborate

At first, it was hard for him to show his inferential and interpretive comprehension because he still has not successfully developed a higher level of comprehension. He still lacks the ability to interpret and elaborate one specific paragraph with related pictures or another paragraph. Moreover, he also struggled in elaborating it and tended to give up. The problem probably happened due to his insufficient comprehension of the text. Considering the struggle, the utilization of mixing, switching, chunking, and giving some clues were the right decision as it was proven effective. The scaffolding helped the learner to achieve something outside his ability which was in line with Vygotsky's theory (Rose & Martin, 2012). Furthermore, it led the participant to successfully reach his lower-level comprehension involving decoding, making meaning, differentiating one word based on structural information (Rose & Martin, 2012; Matata et al., 2020), and activating their background knowledge (Becerra et al., 2020). It also helped him develop his higher-level comprehension in correlating his background knowledge, evaluating the text, reassessing his comprehension, and elaborating the text (Rose & Martin, 2012; Stoller & Grabe, 2011).



**Figure 2. Tareq's Sample Work on Worksheet 4.1**

The great support of R2L pedagogy made Tareq have the ability to reflect and re-assess his background knowledge. Reflecting and re-assessing the text are two abilities that reflect a

higher level of comprehension where it could be said that the learner has comprehend the text thoroughly (Stoller & Grabe, 2011).

To summarize, literal, inferential, and interpretive comprehension were supported by R2L pedagogy phases. In this present study, Tareq's comprehension and ability seemed to be supported by the implementation of R2L pedagogy. It occurred due to a good amount of scaffolding from preparing for reading and detailed reading phase. The findings were in line with the results of the research conducted by Becerra et al (2020) which discovered that preparing for reading and the detailed reading phase help learners build and use their background knowledge, as well as familiarize themselves with the field and register. Moreover, Becerra et al. (2020) and Mataka et al. (2020) recognized the betterment of participants' answers during and after implementing two R2L pedagogy phases named the preparing for reading and detailed reading phase, which was also in line with the present study. R2L pedagogy made the learner face a little struggle in comprehending the text up to the last meeting, proven by the betterment of his answer.

Even though the results on this study was similar to other research done by Becera et al (2020) and Mataka et al. (2020), the number of participants and participants' age who participated throughout the research were different. Two mentioned research was implementing R2L pedagogy to 42 nine-grade students (Becerra et al., 2020) and a grade R, which is equal to five-to seven-year-old students (Mataka et al., 2020). Meanwhile, in this research, one young English language learner aged 12 years old was participating throughout the research. Therefore, indeed that the process of developing reading comprehension was different in terms of the participants' ability and background knowledge. So, the present research could enrich the knowledge related to developing reading comprehension skills using R2L pedagogy for a young learner. .

#### **4. Conclusion**

This study explored how R2L pedagogy supports a young English language learner aged 12 years old reading comprehension skills. The results showed that a sufficient amount of scaffolding provided by R2L pedagogy, developed based on Vygotsky's theory and Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics supported the learner's comprehension. Specifically, the implementation of preparing for reading and detailed reading phase were beneficial in supporting the learner comprehension. Phases of reading exchange, step-by-step summary, and reading aloud were the scaffolding that helped the learner process the comprehension of the text. It helped the learner develop decoding ability, making meaning of the words, differentiating the words, analyzing the main and supporting ideas, correlating the text elements, interpreting the information based on the background knowledge, and analyzing the writer's aim. Reflecting on the results of this study, it was possible for every teacher in Indonesia to implement phases of R2L pedagogy, especially in primary school levels. The flexibility of R2L pedagogy in terms of giving scaffolding to learners made it easy for every teacher to adjust it based on the learner's ability and educational situations. Furthermore, the phases that were used also could be followed and selected based on the focus skills, whether it was reading or writing skills. As proven by this study, the use of R2L pedagogy could support young learners' reading comprehension skills. Despite the fact that this study added some new insight in teaching reading to English for young learners, there were also some limitations regarding the results of this study. The results of this study did not reflect the ability of one group of learners which in this study was young learners. It was because children' ability and characteristics are very different from

one another. Furthermore, the implementation of R2L in this study was very restricted due to the targeted skills. As known for sure, R2L pedagogy has a number of phases that could be used to support both reading and writing skills. However, due to the targeted skills, this study only implemented the preparing reading and the detailed reading phase. Therefore, the results of this study did not reflect the implementation of all phases of R2L pedagogy.

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