

IMPROVING STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH DIRECTED READING THINKING ACTIVITY

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at improving students' reading comprehension through Directed Reading Thinking Activity. The objective of this study is to find out whether students' reading comprehension achievement improved if they are taught by using Directed Reading Thinking Activity. In this study, classroom action research is conducted. The sample is one class of the second year students of SMA Katolik 1 Kabanjahe. The total number of the students is 40 students. The data are acquired from tests, observation sheet and questionnaire sheet. The students' score mean is improved in every test. The mean of the second cycle (73.35) is higher than that in the first cycle (59.38) and in the pre-test (43.28). The observation sheet and questionnaire sheet show that the students' reading comprehension achievement is improved. These findings indicate that applying Directed Reading Thinking Activity improved students' reading comprehension.

Key Words: Directed Reading Thinking Activity, reading comprehension

INTRODUCTION

There are so many written words around us. So many books are written to be read. These readings sometimes give us inspiration, teach us, warn us, amuse us, please us, entertain us and so forth. Moreover, by reading texts, people can broaden and upgrade their knowledge since knowledge and information are printed in the form of books, newspapers, magazines and so on.

According to Jain and Patel (2008: 113), reading means to understand the meaning of printed words i.e. written symbols. Reading is an active process which consists of recognition and comprehension skill. Reading is considered very important activity in life with which one can update his/her knowledge. Moreover, reading skill is assumed as an important tool for academic success. Bacon's dictum: "Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and diverted" implies that it is very important to develop kind of reading habits.

Language proficiency consists of four skills; they are listening, speaking, reading and writing. Surprisingly, Jain and Patel note that reading is most useful and important skill for people. Reading, which is said as a source of joys, is more important than speaking and writing.

There are many roles that reading plays in society. Nowadays, people live in a society that assumes print literacy. People read at work, as they drive, as they shop. The

institutions of economy, government and culture rest upon written language and depend upon the capacity to read. Reading is a major source of pleasure in our society. Millions of books, magazines and papers are read every day. Reading allows access to generations of thought, to vast numbers of facts, to images of the world remote from our daily experience. Reading plays a particularly important role in education. Not only does education system demand a lot of reading in the process of learning, but also tends to use the capacity to read fluently as an indicator of more general intellectual ability. This ability to read therefore cannot be ignored. It is needed to resist and reform.

When reading, readers know exactly what they are reading. They comprehend what is being read. When reading, readers try to extract and construct meaning from what they are reading. This is what reading comprehension means. Students interact with written information everyday to broaden, improve and update their knowledge. They will even be able to obtain more information, knowledge, and lesson from what they read rather than what their teachers can give. Moreover, they can practice self-learning and develop self reliance.

Therefore, reading comprehension is badly needed to be mastered by students. For reading comprehension is very important to be mastered by students, teachers need to develop and upgrade their knowledge and ability in teaching reading. Teachers can use different kinds of media and methods to make the teaching more interesting.

In Educational Unit-Educated Curriculum, students are expected to be able to comprehend the meaning of both interpersonal and transactional written text formally and informally in the forms of recount, narrative, procedure, descriptive and report in daily life context. Therefore, it is very important to teach the students to understand the reading easier, faster and more effective.

However, in reality, the goals that are desired as the competence have not completely been achieved yet. Based on the writer's experience during the teaching practice program (PPL) he experienced, he found that in teaching reading, students are just invited to read the text in turn, translate it into Indonesian in their exercise book, and then collect it to obtain grades, and finally are asked to answer some questions based on the text. They often spent their time to read all the text, open dictionaries and translate them. When asked to retell the story or questioned some informational question related to the text they have read, most of them did not have any idea because they used to translate text. Therefore, the purpose of reading cannot be gained by the students. It is estimated that there are two major factors that affect this gap. The first factor comes from the readers. It deals with the readers' interest, vocabulary mastery, and life experiences. The second factor comes from the instruction factors from teachers.

Considering this problem, teacher should change the old strategy in teaching reading and should consider a new and effective teaching strategy because a teacher's teaching strategy is one of the most influential factors in the success of learning.

Various approach, methods, and techniques of language teaching have been created, used and replaced. According to Stauffer as quoted by Crawford (2005: 44) Directed Reading Thinking Activity is a popular method for engaging students in reading narrative texts for understanding. Wiesendanger quotes that Directed Reading

Thinking Activity is a strategy in which student are guided through reading, making predictions, rereading, confirming, or readjusting predictions. The Directed Reading Thinking Activity can be one alternative technique used by teachers in teaching reading comprehension. Since reading is an active process, the students must be active in doing the reading. In Directed Reading Thinking Activity, the students are invited to be active readers within their groups. The students will be divided into small groups to learn the texts to help them have a supporting and comfortable environment to read, give opinion, and cooperate. The teacher will guide the students within their groups by providing questions related to the comprehension of the text. The students will be directed while reading the texts so that the students can comprehend the texts better. Moreover, students are invited not only to develop their critical thinking because they will make predictions and determine reasons why they predict so, but also to set a purpose of reading since they have to confirm their previous predictions.

Based on the explanation, it is essential to use a suitable and effective technique to help students to solve their reading comprehension problem. This study is designed and conducted to prove whether Directed Reading Thinking Activity method improves students' reading comprehension.

METHODOLOGY

In this research, the study was conducted as classroom action research. Tomal (2003:5) says that simply stated, action research is a systemic process of solving educational problems and making improvements.

Classroom action research consists of four process, namely planning, action, observation and reflection.

a) Planning

Planning is arrangement for doing something. In planning, the researcher not only considered everything that was related to the action but also prepared everything needed in teaching and learning process. The activities done in this phase were:

- a. Making the lesson plan
- b. Selecting the collaborator who will help the researcher in analyzing the weaknesses in the learning process
- c. Preparing the media for teaching
- d. Preparing research instrument, such as observation and interview sheet to observe the process of teaching and learning
- e. Planning and designing the model and scenario of Directed Reading Thinking Activity
- f. Preparing the test to measure the result of the study

b) Action

Action is the process of doing. It is the implementation of planning. The researcher did everything that had been planned. The researcher distributed questionnaires to fill in by the students and socialized the Directed Reading Thinking Activity. The activities done were:

- a. The students were taught about the importance of reading comprehension
- b. The students were taught about narrative text and its generic structures
- c. The students were taught about the procedure of Directed Reading Thinking Activity to improve students' reading comprehension
- d. The students were divided into several groups
- e. The students were given a text that had been marked four stopping points.
- f. The researcher provided a chart to fulfill by the students. This chart contains the predictions of what a story they read is going to be and also how the story actually told
- g. The students were invited to answer questions based on the text they had been read before

c) Observation

Observation is proposed to find out information of action, such as students' attitude, behaviors, activities and contribution of each student. This was done when the teaching and learning process took place. The observer observed the whole process of teaching and learning in the classroom where the procedure of Directed Reading Thinking Activity applied. From this observation, the researcher knew not only the condition of the class but also the problems that necessarily solved.

d) Reflection

Reflection is the feedback process from the action that has been conducted. The researcher and the observer analyzed the result of the test that had been administered in order to find out not only the weaknesses of the students but also the improvement after doing the teaching and learning process. Observation that had been taken from the collaborator was used as the consideration of the next cycle. The researcher reflected on everything that had been done and made consideration to determine the conclusion to conduct the next cycle for this was the last phase in the first cycle. Based on this reflection, the researcher discussed with the observer and decided to conduct the next cycle.

This research applies quantitative and qualitative data. The qualitative data is used to describe the situation during the teaching and learning process while the quantitative data is used to analyze the score of the students.

The qualitative data were obtained and analyzed from the observation sheet and questionnaire sheet to see the progress of the students' reading comprehension in reading narrative text through Directed Reading Thinking Activity and whole process when the teaching and learning took place.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this part, the discussion of the data and the findings are divided into the first cycle and the second cycle.

FIRST CYCLE

Before receiving any treatment, students were given a pre test to know their ability in comprehending a text. The following table shows the result of the test.

Table 1 The Result of Pre Test

Grade	Frequency	Percentage
85-100	0	0.00
75-84	0	0.00
65-74	1	2.50
59-64	3	7.50
0-58	36	90.00
Total	40	100

Based on the table above, it can be concluded that dominantly the range of the students' reading comprehension achievement is 0-58 with the total number of 36 students and 90% in percentage, 7.50% in the range of 59-64, and 2.50% in the range of 65-74. After conducting the first cycle and giving treatment, the researcher conducted the second test to find out the students' progress. The progress of the students' score can be seen from the following table.

Table 2 The Result of Post Test Cycle I

Grade	Frequency	Percentage
85-100	0	0.00
75-84	3	7.50
65-74	6	15.00
59-64	7	17.50
0-58	24	60.00
Total	40	100

The table indicates that there is improvement of students' reading comprehension achievement after treatments were given. There are 3 students whose score is in the range of 75-84 or about 7.50%, 15% in the range of 65-74, 17.50% in the range of 59-64, 60% in the range of 0-58.

The improvement of students' scores can be seen from both the mean and the percentage of students who pass the test. Students who pass the test are students whose score is 70 or above (based on KKM). The mean of the first test is 43.28 and the mean of the second test is 59.38. Moreover, the percentage of students passing up the first test is 0%, increase to 17.5% in the second test.

In groups, some students were active, but most of them did not know what to do and passive in group. Therefore, those who were active found it interesting and had passion to apply this method; however, those who were passive had no idea but to follow the active students' idea and predictions rather than to deliver their own ideas. Group II was the most active group in cycle I. Furthermore, group I, III, and IV were quite active. They were still confused with the applied method. Meanwhile, the rest groups, group V, VI, VII, and VIII were categorized as passive groups.

One problem that occurred in this cycle was when the students did the predicting and confirming their predictions. They sometimes spent too much time on it. Some students made so much noise instead. They neither focused on what teacher's explanation nor did the discussion cooperatively in their groups. Furthermore, the students also did not have bravery in giving their opinion. Therefore, the teacher controlled them and assisted them to manage the predicting and confirming the predictions and finally invited them to develop their own ideas.

SECOND CYCLE

After having a reflection in the first cycle, the second cycle was conducted. At the end of this cycle, post test cycle two was administered. The following table presents the result of the test.

Table 3 The Result of Post Test Cycle II

Grade	Frequency	Percentage
85-100	0	0.00
75-84	19	47.50
65-74	20	50.00
59-64	0	0.00
0-58	1	2.50
Total	40	100

The table shows that 47.50% students have score in the range of 75-84, 50% in the range of 65-74, and 2.50% in the range of 0-58%. The mean of this third test is 73.35 and the percentage of students passing up the test is 92.50%.

In this cycle, there were 3 groups which were active in the class; they are group II, V and VIII. They could follow the strategy well and had a good interest on reading. Then, group I, III, IV, and VII were quite active. Moreover, there was one group which was not very active in the class. Overall, in this cycle, the students' interest in reading has grown up. As the previous cycle, the students were also invited to do the reading, predicting, and confirming predictions cycle as the application of Directed Reading Thinking Activity. Surprisingly, at this cycle, when invited to deliver their group prediction, they were very passionate and always wanted to be the first. They found it enjoyable to study narrative texts by using Directed Reading Thinking Activity.

The teacher and the students had a good interaction. The students were more active and motivated in this cycle. They both focused on what teacher's explanation and did the discussion cooperatively in their groups. Moreover, the students was also confident in delivering their opinion. They were passionate in studying reading comprehension.

DISCUSSIONS

According to McIntyre E. et al, reading is comprehending. This means if children can read the words of a text, but do not understand what they are reading, they are not really reading. In other words, if they can not get something from the text they read, they are not really reading. The activeness of the readers is the key of a successful reading. A good reader is always actively engaged in the reading task. Frustrated readers, on the other hand, think of reading as a passive "sideline" task, something that doesn't require their active participation (Chesla (2000:13).

Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) encourages students to make predictions while they are reading. After reading segments of a text, students stop, confirm or revise previous predictions, and make new predictions about what they will read next (Conner, 2006). This method definitely forces the students to be an active reader since this cyclic of reading, making prediction, and confirming predictions requires the critical thinking of the reader and also a full attention from the reader.

Another condition for a successful reading is the existence of the motivation from the readers. The motivation itself can be grown up and acquired if there is an important element; that is a purpose of reading. If there is not any purpose in reading, readers would not have passion to continue reading. It is the same as a big ship in the ocean; however, in its bigness, it can not go without destination and purpose. The same thing goes to readers. Fortunately, according to Conner (2000), the main purposes of Directed Reading Thinking Activity can cover both the active reader and the purpose of reading. When applying this method, a reader has a purpose of reading and this encourages him or her to be an active reader.

In the first cycle, the researcher has explained not only the narrative text along with its generic structures but also the importance of reading and the way to comprehend a text. It is not just a translating a word by word activity, it is more than

that. Readers have to look the flow of the text, the connection of each sentence, and the meaning or information constructed and intended by the writer. Furthermore, there were still many students who did not know and care of what to do with the text. Sometimes they were still shy and reluctant to express and deliver their ideas even in their own groups. It happened because the researcher did not organize the classroom well, especially in their groups.

In this research, the students comprehended the text together in their groups. However, most of them were not active and enthusiastic in the discussion. Therefore, not all members of the groups knew and comprehended the text well. They were also reluctant and lazy to ask more explanation to the researcher if they got difficulties in doing their works or to ask the things that were not clear enough while the teaching and learning process took place. All students could improve their score in this first cycle. However, most of the improvement is not significant. This happened due to the lack of activeness of the students in their group and bad interactions between students and the researcher.

In the second cycle, the researcher organized and controlled the class better than in the first cycle and improved his ability in teaching reading by using Directed Reading Thinking Activity in order to motivate the students to be more active to do their work well, try their best in comprehending the text, grow up their bravery to deliver their ideas, and invite them to ask the researcher if there were unclear things or difficulties in doing their discussion. The researcher also improved his ability in interacting with the students and also the management of group discussion. The researcher tried to be more open and warm to the students. Every group was visited, motivated, and encouraged to be brave to deliver ideas and to be active readers. As the result, the researcher and the students had a good interaction in the teaching and learning process. Moreover, most the students were pleased and enthusiastic in studying reading. They found it interesting to read and to have a purpose while reading. Their bravery also grew up and they become more active in their groups. However, there were few students who were not so active and still shy in giving their opinion.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

CONCLUSION

Based on the result of the study, the conclusions are drawn as follows: (1) There is an improvement of students' achievement in reading narrative text if it is taught by using Directed Reading Thinking Activity. It is showed from the mean of the students' scores in three tests: test I (43.28), test II (59.38) and test III (73.35), (2) The observation sheet and questionnaire sheet indicate that there is improvement in students' abilities and interest in learning reading comprehension. It is shown that most of students became more enthusiastic and it is strengthened by the improvement of their reading scores, (3) It is proved both quantitatively and qualitatively that the application of Directed Reading Thinking Activity improves the students' achievement in reading narrative texts.

SUGGESTION

Based on the conclusions above, the following suggestions are offered: (1) It is suggested that teachers apply Directed Reading Thinking Activity so that they can improve their students' achievement in reading comprehension, (2) It is suggested that students use Directed Reading Thinking Activity while reading so that they can comprehend texts easily, (3) It is suggested that readers learn and apply Directed Reading Thinking Activity in comprehending texts, especially narrative since this method is not only interesting but also useful in developing critical thinking.

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