

IMPROVING THE STUDENTS' READING SKILL THROUGH SHORT STORY TECHNIQUE (A Classroom Action Research at the Seventh Grade of Junior High School Students)

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Abstract: The aims of this research are to solve the English reading problem and to know the effectiveness of using short story in teaching reading. This research is using classroom action research with three cycles. Each cycle consist of four steps; planning, action, observation and reflection. The sample of the research is the seventh grade of Junior High School students. The data are obtained from direct and indirect observation and collaboration. In the direct observation, the data is from field observation and In the indirect one, the data is from the test result. Based on the data collected it is found that some students are active in reading practice through short story technique. Further, the students have more desire and motivation to improve their reading skill. Looking up the evaluation table, the reading from thirty three students in three cycles can be explained; in the first cycle, students get the average score 63.0 or there are thirteen students (39.4%) who achieve the standard of minimum score achievement (65.0). In the second cycle, they get the average score 69.6 or there are twenty eight students (84.8%) who achieved the standard minimum score. While in the third cycle, they get 77.0 on their average sore or all of them (100%) can achieve the standard minimum score. Furthermore, the writer concludes that the use of short story technique approach can be one of the appropriate approach to teach English reading skill for the students.

Keywords: *reading skill, short story, action research*

INTRODUCTION

Reading skill is about understanding written texts. It is a complex activity that involves both perception and thought. Reading consist of two related processes; word recognition and comprehension. Word recognition refers to processes of perceiving how written symbols correspond to one's spoken language. Comprehension is the process of making sense of words, sentences and connected text. Readers typically make use of background knowledge, vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, experience with text and other

strategies to help them understand written text.

Reading is the process of reading the text. It involves word knowledge (vocabulary) as well as thinking and reasoning. Therefore, reading is not a passive process, but an active one. The reader actively engages with the text to construct meaning and to comprehend the text, the readers should be able to manage every part of the text, because it is easy to gain the comprehension in reading when the readers are able to organize the text.

Sometimes, they may find form of pre questioning and it is important for them to comprehend a reading text by having knowledge in general view of the text. Theoretically, pre questioning itself can build the students' interest and motivation before students read the whole text. Moreover, the students can predict what will be discussed on the text.

Having more prior knowledge generally helps reading. There are many aspect to prior knowledge, including knowledge of the world, cultural knowledge, subject matter knowledge and linguistic knowledge. A reader's interest in a subject matter will also influence the level of prior knowledge. All of these factors are important to different degrees, depending on the reading task. A reader's knowledge of the world depends on live experience. This is different in different countries, region and cultures. Reading tasks and reading instruction should be sensitive to the types of prior knowledge that are needed for the reader to understand a text.

One of teaching learning methods for some students and can motivate them to understand reading and teaching language skill wholly is using short story technique. The short story technique is that students must depend on the text, intonation, pronunciation and stressing other for their information, so they must interact to accomplish a given task.

Short story technique is a cooperative learning approach with a track record of successfully reducing racial conflict and increasing positive educational outcomes. Eventually each student will come back to her or his contextual understanding to try present a well-organized report or answer for some questions based on the text.

Luckily, by using short story technique, reading is effectively supposed to enlarge the students amount of vocabulary, promote their ability to enrich their reading skill and to cultivate their sense of English language

and composition structures. This paper, through an analysis of the present situation of English reading in junior high schools, is aimed to prove the necessity and feasibility of applying short story activity and to put the technique in reading practice.

The Objective

The objectives of this paper are to present the outline program and its implementation of short story technique in improving students' reading skill. This paper also present steps of classroom action research in three cycles which each cycle consist of four steps; planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Definition of Reading

In reading, that remarkable instrument must, almost simultaneously, take information provided by eyes, relate it to what it already knows about the subject, and thereby construct a full meaning for text. In doing, the brain of the reader makes use of the minimum number of visual code required to convert printed text information, just as it does in identifying other subject of vision, like flowers. Natural(1982:9) states, "it is probably self evident that the conceptions educators hold about the nature of reading shape their approaches to helping students improve their reading abilities". Reading is a kind of interaction between reader and writer. Joice (1996:764) states "reading is the process to extract meaning from written or printed language". To possess reading skill of written or printed language, the students would have any ability to read correctly so that they have few mistake in studying reading. The more student as a reader has knowledge, the lesser information that he has to read to understand the meaning or explain words in reading.

Moreover, Mikulecky (1990:156) states, "Reading is complex behavior which involves conscious and unconscious used of various strategies, including problem solving strategies, to build a model of the meaning which the writer is assumed to have intended". From that definition can be explained that when reading, reader have to active to do a lot of strategy in order to understand content of reading material with the writer said. In this case known that reading is not only a passive activity, as at time reading, but also the reader has to interact actively his knowledge with the content of reading.

2 Kinds of Reading

Some students cannot read a few paragraph in English text book and become fluent in reading. They need reading continually and constantly. In some purpose of reading, there are two kinds of reading :

a. Reading for practicing

In such this reading, reader should read slowly and concentrate on the relationship words to words and grammatical structures. Reading to practice is a way of foreign students read English. Students read English to learn how a sentence was put together and how verbs agree to the subject, etc.

b. Reading for information

Reading for information is a kind of reading which reader does read like his own language. On the other word, the reader does not stop to analyze grammatical structure when he picks up some reading materials. He understands structure without thinking about it. He must able to read beyond the clause maker, preposition and other structure clauses. He has to learn and study for meaning. Reading for information requires the reader understand the meaning of the passages. He should have the ability to understand the author's main idea and fact that used to support the main idea.

3 Using Reading Strategies

Language instructor are often frustrated by the fact that students do not automatically transfer the strategies they use when reading in their native language to reading in a language they are learning. Instead, they seem to think reading means starting at the beginning and going word by word, stopping to look up every unknown vocabulary item, until they reach the end. When they do this, students are relying exclusively on their linguistic knowledge, a bottom up strategy. One of the most important functions of the language instructor then is to help students move past this idea and use top down strategy as they do in their native language.

Effective language instructor shows students how they can adjust their reading behavior to deal with a variety of situations, types of input, and reading purposes. They help students develop a set of reading strategies and match appropriate strategies to each reading situation. Strategies that can help students read more quickly and effectively include; previewing, predicting, skimming and scanning, guessing from context and paraphrasing. Previewing is reviewing titles, section headings and photo captions to get a sense of the structure and content of a reading selection. Predicting is using knowledge of the subject matter to make predictions about content and vocabulary and check comprehension; using knowledge about the author to make predictions about discourse structure; using knowledge about the author to make predictions about writing style, vocabulary, and content. Skimming and scanning is using a quick survey of the text to get the main idea, identify text structure, confirm or question predictions. Guessing from context is using prior knowledge of the subject and the ideas in the text as clues to the meanings of unknown words, instead of stopping to look them up. Last, paraphrasing is stopping at the end of section to check comprehension by restating the information and ideas in the text instructors can help students learn

when and how to use reading strategies in several ways.

According to Ryder and Michael (2003:237), to help students understand reading material, there need some strategies used to; by modeling the strategies aloud, talking through the processes of previewing, predicting, skimming and scanning and paraphrasing. This shows students how the strategies work and how much they can know about a text before they begin to read word by word, by allowing time in class for group and individual previewing and predicting activities as preparation for in class or out class reading. Allocating class time to these activities indicates their importance and value; by using cloze (fill in the blank) exercises to review vocabulary items. This helps students learn to guess meaning from context; by encouraging students to talk about what strategies they think will help them approach a reading assignment and then talking after reading about what strategies they actually used. This helps students develop flexibility in their choice of strategies.

As language learners use reading strategies, they find that they can control the reading experience and they gain confidence in their ability to read the language. Traditionally, the reading strategy of learning to read in a language has been to have access to the literature written in that language.

4 Reading to Learn

Reading is an essential part of language instruction at every level because it supports learning in multiple ways. By giving students a variety of materials to read, instruction provide multiple opportunities for students to absorb vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure and discourse structure as they occur in authentic contexts. Students thus gain a more complete picture of the ways in which the elements of the language work together

to convey meaning. Further, reading for content information is students' purpose for reading in their native language is often to obtain information about a subject they are studying, and this purpose can be useful in the language learning classroom as well. Reading for content information in the language classroom gives students both authentic reading material and an authentic purpose for reading. Moreover, reading for cultural knowledge and awareness is reading everyday materials that are designed for native speakers can give students insight into the lifestyles and worldviews of the people whose language they are studying.

According to Janette Pelletier describes how reading skill and reading comprehension were shown to release to metacognitive factors such as theory of minds and metacognitive language in two empirical studies in Toronto, Canada. To present an enriching educational program, teachers must find the balance between activity based instruction and text based instruction. Content books should be selected that present authentic and rich texts that can be supported by the teacher.

5 Short Story

The term "short story" explains itself. It is fiction that is, it is an imaginary story and it is short. There are also so many different kinds of short stories, the term is almost impossible to define. Nugroho (1984:176) said that "cerita pendek adalah cerita yang panjangnya disekitar 5000 kata atau kira-kira 17 halaman kuarto spasi rangkap yang terpusat dan terlengkap pada dirinya". For one thing, how short is short? Some stories are only 1000 words long, others are 20 times as long. Edgar Allan Poe (1976:175) said that "a short story should be short enough to be read at a single sitting". Reading time will differ of course with different reader.

The short story differs in important ways from longer fiction. Many things happen in

novel. In most short stories only one thing happens. Most short stories seldom have more than three or four. In fact, the short story writer tries to make one detail suggest many others, the way a dusty blackboard can suggest an entire classroom.

There are four classification in short story :

a. Crime

It is connecting with mastery story, detective story, legend, etc

b. Science fiction, Fantasy and Horror.

The line between science and fantasy/horror was quite clearly drawn. Science fiction looked into the future, with well educated writes extrapolating produce scenarios of life they imagined. Fantasy was imaginatic without suggesting that anything in the story could actually happen. Horror was blood and gone enormous octopuses rising from the deep to over whole ocean liners, the living dead prowling dark city streets.

c. Romance

This is another of the special section, now found in most libraries, and although it has very few short story collection

d. Horror

Horror is so individual that what makes one reader chuck up will leave another totally unmoved, but because it is so difficult to do well, it is always in demand.

Story can be one of the effective ways to introduce a new language to children because story always provide meaningful content. It can be an interesting way if we know how to present it interestingly.

6 Classroom action research

The classroom action research is a part of action research which teacher, with collaborator, takes a part in educational improvement and brings a good effect for quality and quantity improvement in a classroom activity. The teacher directly observes the students to get the

improvement in the classroom. Hollingsworth (1997:205) states "classroom action research is to bring a theory and a practice of improvement educational system, including participatory research, collaborative inquiry, emancipator research, action learning, and contextual action research, but all are variations on a theme." It is said that in action research, writer teacher has to put simply theory and action, action of the research is 'learning by doing' – a group of people identify a problem, do something to resolve it, see how successful; their effort were, and if not satisfied, try again.

Method

This research uses the qualitative paradigm in the classroom action research which is supported by quantitative data. The subject of the research is the students of seventh grade.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The classroom action research in first cycle reflected that the teaching and learning activity of reading skill through short story technique did not work well. We can see that the average score at the first cycle is 63.0. It can be implied that almost all of the students were not active enough to practice English reading through story telling,, because they prefer reading Indonesian to English.

The classroom action research in second cycle reflected that there were still problem of the students and the teacher. The teacher was not ready enough to teach reading and the students were not too creative to improve reading skill through story telling. The students was not accustomed to do reading practice using short story and there were some students who got low score and it was proven by the average score at the second cycle is 69.0.

On the third cycle, the observation is focused on the situation of classroom activity that can run better. Further, the

students practiced reading through short story interestingly and enthusiastically. They can take the advantageous to improve their reading skill and it was proven by the average score on this cycle is 77.0.

The teacher and the students were able to read their short story fairly good and achieve the target of the research and it shown that their reading score increase significantly.

Teaching reading using short story could be an alternative way in teaching english and also could bring changes of the atmosphere of the classroom. On the other side, the teacher should have so many varieties of applying short story technique. It was done to make the teaching aid suitable with the lesson. The teacher also

needed to pay attention while the students were using short story to avoid making mistaken in formulating questions.

CONCLUSION

Based on the result of three cycles, the average score is 63.0 for the first cycle, 69.0 for the second cycle and 77.0 for the third cycle, and it is concluded that reading skill can be improved through story telling, so it can be used for the English teacher in general when teaching reading. Reading activity through short story can be supported by the condition of classroom and the students which the students can show their capability in reading skill with other friends to discuss the short story given by the teacher.

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