

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THEME-BASED TEACHING TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION ON EIGHTH GRADE AT SMP NEGERI 4 TANGGUL

Afifah Nur Fajriyah (1510231055)

Advisor¹ : Dr. Mochamad Hatip, M.Pd.

Advisor² : Widya Oktarini, MA.

English Education Program Muhammadiyah University of

Jember Jl. Karimata No. 49 Jember

Telp. 0331 336728

Email : afifahfajriyah18@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study attempts to improve students' reading comprehension by using theme-based teaching. This study was conducted by using Classroom Action Research. This study was conducted on the eighth grade students at SMP Negeri 4 Tanggul. The number of the subject of this research was 31 students. In completing the research, the researcher used reading test and checklist as the instruments of collecting the data. By conducting the classroom Action Research that is reading comprehension using theme-based teaching, it was found out that theme-based teaching was able to improve students' reading comprehension. The result of this research has shown the progress in improve reading comprehension in each cycle. First cycle was 58% (less than 75, not achieved). The second cycle was 80.6% (achieved) which was higher than presentages score requirement. Based on the field notes, the students were more enjoy, enthusiastic during teaching and learning process in the second cycle than in the first cycle.

Key Words : reading comprehension, theme-based teaching.

Language has an important role to develop intellectual, social, emotional aspects and to determine success in studying all subject matters. It expectedly helps the student to reflect their

experiences to show their idea and feelings and also to understand any kinds of meaning. English, then, is chosen as the first foreign language to be learned by students in both formal and non-formal

education in our country. For students in Junior high school, though English is given only as a local subject, it has an important role in preparing the students to continue their study to the next stages of education. Junior high school is the right place to make the students familiar with English. In line with the previous idea, some experts describe Theme-based Teaching as an approach to language teaching in which the whole course is structured around certain themes or topic (Brinton in Yang, 2009, p. 162).

Based on interview with the English teacher on eighth grade, the researcher concludes that 1) the students get difficulties in recognizing words; 2) the students get difficulties in remembering words; 3) the students get difficulties in grasping the meaning of English words; 4) the students get difficulties in pronouncing words correctly; 5) the students get difficulties in writing and reading words correctly.

Because the standard score of the school is 75 and there were only 51.6% of the students scored ≥ 75 in the reading comprehension test held by the English teacher. Theme-based Teaching can help students read, if interesting reading material is provided with a theme or topic that makes it easier for students to understand the reading of the text.

So that, arouses the interest of students to read texts or books.

The literature related to the implementation of Theme-based Teaching is regarded as an approach that is suitable to be applied in teaching young learners since “the use of this approach offers exciting possibilities for young learners and their teacher” (Cameron, 2001, p. 197). As an example, there is a study conducted by Yang (2009, p. 161) in an English course for primary English as second language (ESL) students in a non-school setting in Hong Kong. The study was aimed to investigate the learners’ perceptions and the impact of Theme-based Teaching on their levels of interests in an English course. As the result, it was found that most of the participants involved in the study agreed that teaching activities and tasks were more integrated and organized with the adoption of theme-based teaching (Yang, 2009, p. 170).

Regarding to the positive achievement of the use of Theme-based Teaching as described above, this research investigates the implementation of Theme-based Teaching in teaching English young learners. Despite the fact that learning new language will be easier through listening and speaking than from written text, especially for young learners in improving

their reading skill. In this case, the young learners are the eighth grade students of junior high school students as the respondents of this research is that they are already how to read and write in their First Language (L1). Consequently, they are considered to be ready to learn another language, in this case is English.

Therefore, this research is intended to find out how the teacher teaches reading skill to young learners by implementing theme-based teaching in the reading comprehension achievement presented in the classroom according to the theory of theme-based teaching from Cameron (2001, p. 180-198) and its principles from Brown in Sundayana (1994, p. 222) by synthesized it with the theory related to reading activities.

METHOD

The Researchers chose eighth grade students at SMP Negeri 4 Tanggul as research subjects. This school was chosen for two reasons. First, the Principal grants permission for researchers to conduct classroom action research. Second, as informed by the English teacher in the preliminary study, eighth grade students at SMP Negeri 4 Tanggul have problems because

of a lack of understanding of learning English in text pronunciation and students also do not have the confidence to ask or answer questions from the teacher. Most students are afraid that they are wrong and their friends will laugh at them.

This research is classified as Classroom Action Research. According to Arikunto (2014, p. 130) classroom action research is the accuracy of activities carried out intentionally and they occur in class. This class action research was conducted in a cycle model. Lewin in Arikunto (2014, p. 131) explains that there are four stages for conducting action research in cycles namely Planing, Acting, Observing, and Reflecting. If the results in the first cycle are not satisfied or do not reach the target score of 75, we need to proceed to the next cycle. On the other hand, if the results of cycle 1 have shown satisfactory results from applying Composite images, it is not necessary to proceed to the next cycle. The subject of this thesis is the eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 4 Tanggul consisting of 31 students.

The research instruments used to collect data were reading and checklist tests. The research instrument can be described as a tool used by researchers to collect data in research. According to Arikunto (2014:

192), instruments are tools when research uses a method. He also stated that tests are a series of questions or exercises and other tools used to measure skills, intelligence knowledge, abilities or talents possessed by individuals or groups. They are needed, to get data for researchers. The success criterion for reading test comprehension is 75% of students reach the target score of 75.

In this study, researchers used content validity. Content validity

tests will be valid if the material and test items are based on the curriculum. In this case, the test question material is in accordance with the material for the first grade of junior high school in K-13. According to Arikunto (2014, p. 211) validity is a measurement that shows the level of instrument validity. Validity is the first important consideration in developing and evaluating measuring instruments (Arikunto, 2014, p. 225).

Then, the researcher decided to conduct the next cycle and the teacher intended to give a better explanation to them.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result of the Research

Result of Cycle 1

The reading comprehension test in cycle 1 was conducted on 20th of November, to know how theme-based teaching can improve students' understanding on narrative text. Reading test was conducted to measure students' comprehension in reading and the text is about narrative text and there were 11 students who got ≥ 75 in reading comprehension, the result of the first cycle test it was 67.7% (see appendix 14). It means that the target score requirement in this research had not been achieved yet. As mentioned before, the students' score of reading comprehension result is considered successful, if $\geq 75\%$ of total students fulfilled the reading standard score ≥ 75 .

Result of Cycle 2

The reading test in cycle 2 was done 2nd of December 2019. After giving another activity in the second cycle, the researcher decided to do the test to the students to know the significant impact on the students' reading comprehension. The test was multiple choice, each question provides one correct answer and the students have to choose the best answer from the question. Based on the test result, we found 25 students with score 75 or more.

The result of the second cycle test could be 80.6% (see appendix 17). It means that the target score requirement in this research had already achieved.

DISCUSSION

Improving Eighth Grade Students' Reading Comprehension by Using Theme-Based Teaching

Based on the reflection in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2, the percentages of the students who got scores ≥ 75 were improved from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2. It had improved from 58% in Cycle 1 up to 80.6% in Cycle 2. In the first cycle, the action was carried out by teaching reading through theme-based teaching to improve the students' reading comprehension.

The result of reading test in the first cycle showed that the means score of the students reading test is 72 and the percentage of students who got score ≥ 75 is 58%. The actions were regarded successful if more than 75%. It means that the standard mean score and the percentage requirement of reading in the first cycle of this research had not been achieved (not successful).

Then the researchers proceed to the next cycle. In cycle 2 it was carried out with several revisions to get better results because the previous actions did not meet the research objectives. After the action in cycle 2, the reading test results show improvement. The average value of students' reading tests was 81

and the percentage of students who scored ≥ 75 increased by 80.6%. It has reached the target percentage of 75%.

Using theme-based teaching in teaching reading comprehension can improve students' reading comprehension, make students more effective and students feel more enthusiastic when they learn reading comprehension by using this approach. Based on the theory put forward by El-Koumy (2006, p. 4) explains that the level of understanding consists of several divisions of reading, namely: Literal, Inferential, and Referential. Furthermore, theme-based teaching is material that is very suitable for teaching reading in class. This approach can also improve students' reading comprehension by using narrative texts, because in narrative texts there are themes that make students more excited in reading. This statement supported by Cameron (2001, p. 180) "Theme-based Teaching is that many different activities are linked together by their content; the theme or topic runs through everything that happens in the classroom and acts as a connecting thread for pupils and teachers." It means, this theme-based teaching uses a theme or topic as a link between teaching

conducted in class by students and teachers.

Therefore, theme-based teaching can improve reading comprehension. The result of this action research both cycle 1 and cycle 2 had also verified the action hypothesis that the use of theme-based teaching can improve students' reading comprehension on eighth grade at SMP Negeri 4 Tanggul in the 2019/2020 academic year.

Improving Students' Active Participation through Theme-based teaching

In teaching and learning process, researcher needs to observe the students' active participation to know whether the reading material is understood by the students or not. When the researcher taught the students using Theme Based Teaching in narrative text, the English teacher was the one who observed the students' participation using observation checklist table in learning process. It was done in meeting 1 and meeting 2. After that, the researcher calculated the result. The observation checklist result showed that the average percentage of active students in cycle 1, the average active participation of students is 61.25% of students (appendices 18 and 19). In cycle 2, on average 85.3% of students had

active participation (appendices 20 and 21), the active participation of students had met the success criteria. Based on the results of the observation checklist students in cycle 2 succeeded because the target score and percentage requirements had reached 75%. From the explanation above, it can be said that cycle 2 was successful.

The results of cycle 2 show that Theme Based Teaching helps students more actively participate in the process while reading English texts. This is evidenced by the explanation of the principles of theme-based teaching by Brown in Sundayana (1994, p. 222). Furthermore, Brown in Nida (2014, p. 49) states that theme based instruction offers an alternative in teaching learning process by designing a course around theme or topic that can increase students' interest and focus on content chosen. That is, during implementation, students are formed randomly in groups and they agree, so they are comfortable. And they enthusiastically discuss with their groups. Students discuss about themed texts given by researchers, and also answer questions in the text. Students are declared active if they meet the indicators (at least 3 indicators) that the researchers

have set, namely: 1. Attention of students in class; 2. Students submit questions to the teacher; 3. Students understand the material; and 4. Students collect assignments from the teacher.

Theme Based Teaching helps the students to actively participate in the process while reading an English text. It is relating to the purpose of the reading. Pardo (2004, p. 272) states that comprehension is a process in which readers construct meaning by interacting with text through the combination of prior knowledge and previous experience, information in the text, and the stance the reader takes in relationship to the text. It means that in reading activity, it is important for the students to understand or comprehend the text, because one of the purposes of reading itself is to get information or knowledge.

According to Wallace in Ajideh (2006, p. 1) argues that in order to interact efficiently with the text, the second language reader needs access to content as well as context. In other words, second language readers will need to draw on appropriate theme knowledge to reach satisfactory interpretation of the text. That in each meeting, students showed their interest in learning by actively participated in the activities. The students'

participation could reflect that they were motivated during the lesson. In short, as explained in the average percentage of students' observation checklist in cycle 2, Theme Based Teaching can improve the students active participation in teaching and learning process.

Based on the explanation above, it can be summarized that the understanding of teaching reading by using theme-based teaching in narrative texts can increase the active participation on eighth grade students in the learning process at SMP Negeri 4 Tanggul in the 2019/2020 academic year.

CONCLUSION

The result of the research can be concluded as follow:

1. Theme-based teaching can improve reading comprehension on eighth grade students at SMP Negeri 4 Tanggul in the 2019/2020 academic year by using narrative texts. Because by using narrative texts that use themes will make students easier to understand the text, and students are more eager in reading.
2. Theme-based teaching can increase the active participation on eighth grade students in SMP Negeri 4

Tanggul in the academic year 2019/2020 by carrying out activities in groups. By grouping it makes it easy for students to interact with their friends. Thus, making students enjoy and enthusiastic in learning to read texts using themes.

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