IMPROVING STUDENTS’ READING COMPREHENSION BY USING INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING

LIZA OKTARANI
Bengkulu University
Liza.oktarani@gmail.com

Abstract
This research was a classroom action research. The objective of this research was to explain whether using Inquiry Based Learning Strategy can improve students’ reading comprehension and factors improved the students’ reading comprehension at the 8A students of SMPN 7 Kota Bengkulu. The subjects of this research were 32 students, consisted of 15 males and 17 females. The instruments of this research were reading comprehension tests, students’ and teacher’s observation checklists and field notes and interview. The research was conducted into two cycles which included plan, action, observe, and reflect. The test was given at the end of each cycle. The result of this research shows that using Inquiry Based Learning strategy improved students’ reading comprehension. There were 34.37% of students passed the standard score >65 in cycle 1 and improved into 75% in cycle 2. The improvement was influenced by the Inquiry Based Learning strategy, used of media and materials chosen and the teacher activities in the process of teaching and learning.

Keywords: Reading, Inquiry Based Learning Strategy

1. Introduction
In learning English, reading is one of the important skills that students need in order to develop their English ability. Gilakjani (2011) states that there are two important reasons for the students to improve their reading ability. First, as foreign language students, reading is one of their most important goals in learning English. Second, in foreign language teaching, many various pedagogical purposes help reading to receive goals in teaching English. Furthermore, Alyousef (2006) states that the teacher should be responsible to motivate students by providing the appropriate materials in the early stages of learning process. In addition, the teacher should help students to develop reading strategy and match appropriate strategies in every reading situation.

Even though the teacher have provide helps for the students to comprehend a text, many students still have problems with their reading ability. Most of students in Junior High School that researcher observed from the teaching practicum have problems in reading comprehension. When students are asked if they like to read in English, most of them will probably answer without explaining that reading is such a boring activity for them. In fact, they do not like the type of texts provided.

Best, Rowe, Ozura and McNamara (2005) assumed that many students lack of ability to comprehend texts and difficult to find a strategy to generate understanding of the text. According to Twinning (1985), there are some reasons of lack of reading comprehension. They are: (1) failure to understand a word; (2) failure to understand a sentence; (3) failure to understand how sentences are related to another; (4) failure to understand how the information fits in a meaningful way (organization); and (5) lack of interest or concentration.
However, based on the observation that the researcher did during the teaching practicum (PPL) in SMP N 7 Kota Bengkulu, there were some problems faced by the students of the 8th Grade at SMP N 7 Kota Bengkulu in reading comprehension. They were: (1) difficulties to understand idea of a text; (2) difficulties to find out meaning of a text; (3) difficulties to retell a text; (4) difficulties to state the generic structure of a text; and (5) difficulties to interpret a text.

Students with low understanding in reading comprehension need effective strategies to understand what they read and know details information of what they have read. In reading comprehension, the students should be able to manage every part of the texts, because it is easy to gain the comprehension in reading when the students are able to organize the text well. The researcher focused on students reading comprehension problems especially in students’ difficulty of comprehend and understand the text.

Therefore, the researcher wanted to solve students’ problem by using Inquiry Based Learning as a strategy in teaching reading to improve students reading comprehension. Inquiry based learning is a process of active learning driven by questioning and critical thinking. The students can develop and build their understanding and knowledge through Inquiry by active learning (Alberta : 2004). Furthermore, students in the classroom would be more interested in and active by using Inquiry Based Learning strategy to improve their reading ability (Kuhne, 1995).

Inquiry Based Learning provided the students the opportunity to produce deeper learning. This strategy helped the students build their understanding in reading comprehension. Inquiry Based Learning served as a stimulus for learning, thinking and questioning. Using Inquiry Based Learning for teaching Junior high school students could help them become more creative, positive and independent. They have a special needs which require more individual attention during the learning process (Kuhne : 1995).

Based on the statements above, the researcher conducted this research entitled “Improving Students’ Reading Comprehension by Using Inquiry Based Learning Strategy at the 8th Grade Of SMP N 7 Kota Bengkulu” to find out whether using Inquiry Based Learning strategy can improve students reading comprehension. The result of this research was expected to be useful for students’ learning especially in English Study Program and for the teachers to apply this strategy in the classroom to develop students’ ability especially in reading comprehension.

2. Methodology

This study was a classroom action research. According to Mattetal (2001), classroom action research is a method of finding out what works best in the classroom, so that the teachers can improve student learning ability. Classroom action research is used in the real situations rather than in contrived or in experimental studies. The teachers can do review and reflecting in learning process and find a method related to teaching process to solve the problem that face by the students. The research would conduct in cyclonic which consist of four steps: plan, action, observe and reflect. In addition, this research used those steps in the classroom to solve the problems during teaching and learning process.

This research was conducted on the students of the 8th grade of SMP N 7 Kota Bengkulu. The researcher focused on students’ reading comprehension improvement by using Inquiry Based Learning in learning process. The class consists of 32 students at the 8th grade of SMP N 7 Kota Bengkulu. They were 15 male students and 17 female students. The setting of this research was in class 8A of the SMP N 7 Kota Bengkulu. It was located on Jalan Enggano, Pasar Bengkulu.

The instruments of the research were reading comprehension test, observation checklist and field notes and interview. The researcher developed a reading comprehension
test for the students to collect the data of the students’ achievement in understanding the text. The tests consist of two kinds of reading comprehension test. First, reading comprehension test in preliminary test and in the end of cycle 1. The questions in preliminary test and in the end of cycle 1 were similar to see the students’ improvement after applied Inquiry Based-Learning strategy. Second, reading comprehension test in the end of cycle 2. The items of this test consisted of 30 multiple choice questions of reading comprehension that related to the topic or theme of reading ability which adjust to the syllabus and lesson plan. The observation checklist was done in checklist form that contains information about how they learned reading in the classroom and students’ respond of Inquiry based Learning Strategy.

The observation checklist was adapted from Windschitl cited in Harlen (2004). The checklist contained some action based on the Inquiry Based Learning strategy that consisted of four categories, excellent, good, fair and poor. English teacher in SMP N 7 Kota Bengkulu as collaborator observed learning process in the classroom activity while the researcher did the teaching process. The interview contained some questions from the researcher and simply answers from the students. The data was on written form, based on statement from the students.

In this research, the researcher applied some procedures for each cycle that consisted of plan, action, observe and reflect. In plan, there was a lesson plan for teaching reading skill by using Inquiry Based Learning strategy in reading comprehension. Here, the researcher made a lesson plan to apply the strategy in the classroom, prepared the materials and made the test. In action, the researcher did the teaching and learning process based on the lesson plan by using Inquiry Based Learning strategy for each meeting in cycle 1. There were some procedures to apply this strategy:

First step was the formulation of questions that related to the topic. The question can be posed by the teacher or by the students. Second, when a question was posted, the students were encouraged to investigate the topic by gathering information from sources or another that teacher provided or within learning resources or tools that were already available to the students. Third, gathered and organized enough information related to the topic in categories or outline by highlighting the important information. This helped the students making connections with new learning and prior learning. Fourth, the information would be discussed and analyzed for further understanding. The teacher directed the discussion and highlighted the implications that arise from the investigation and showed how it related to the solution of the problem. Last, conclusion was made and related back to the original question. Students’ reflections were encouraged and served as a way to relate back the steps that led conclusion. This also served to reinforce the model, so that students could repeat the process in any problem-solving situation.

The researcher used observation checklists and fieldnotes during the observation. The researcher collected and analyzed the result of all step in cycle 1 and give evaluation through test. The analysis result of this stage was used to find out whether the strategy is improved students’ reading comprehension or not after applying the strategy. The result of the reflection was used to develop the next cycle. In cycle 2, there was a similar step by using Inquiry Based Learning in teaching reading comprehension like in cycle 1 but the researcher used another materials source and media.

The researcher collected the data by using quantitative and qualitative data. To collect the quantitative data, the researcher gave the students reading comprehension test and the result of this test would be used as baseline data. At the end of each cycle, the researcher also used reading comprehension test to get the result after applying Inquiry Based Learning Strategy. The data from the test at the end of the cycle would be primary data to know students improvement in reading comprehension. For qualitative data, the researcher
took it from students observation checklist and field notes in each meeting and teacher interview. The researcher asked the teacher to fill out the observation checklist. Fieldnotes was also used to collect the qualitative data more.

Quantitative data was used to describe and measure the data collection. The data obtained from the reading comprehension test and test in the end of each cycle. Both of results test in each cycle were measured in numeral data that would be showed in percentage. The score of students’ was analyzed to know students ability improved or not after applying Inquiry Based Learning strategy. The researcher analyzed students score by using the following formula:

\[ S = \frac{X}{Y} \times 100 \]

Where:
- \( S \) = students score
- \( X \) = the total number of the students’ correct item
- \( Y \) = total number of the test questions items (Sudijono, 2009)

Then, after getting the students score, the researcher analyzed the percentage the number of students who passed the standard score > 65 by using the following formula:

\[ P = \frac{f}{n} \times 100 \]

Where:
- \( P \) = percentage number
- \( f \) = number of students who pass the standard score
- \( n \) = total number of the students (Sudijono, 2009)

This research was successful if Inquiry Based Learning Strategy improved students’ reading comprehension with students percentage of students who reach the standard score > 65 is > 70% of the total students (100%). To measure the successful of this research, the researcher use the following percentage:

While qualitative was used to describe and analyzed data from checklists and field notes. In checklist, the researcher analyzed the data to know how the implementation of Inquiry Based Learning in the classroom. Additional data from field notes was used to know the activity in learning process that could not be check on the checklist. Gay (2000) mentioned, there were five steps for analyzing qualitative data: data managing, reading and memoing, describing, classifying and interpreting.

To measure the successful of this research, the researcher used two indicators as the following: The percentage of students who reached the score of > 65 in reading comprehension is 70% of the total students. The implementation of Inquiry Based Learning Strategy improved students’ interest in reading classroom activity. The students’ activity in teaching process was in good category which was showed from the observation checklist and field notes.
3. Result And Discussion

In this research, the students were given a preliminary test before the cycle 1 was conducted to get baseline data. The test was given on 28th March 2013. The result of this test showed that reading comprehension of the students at the 8A grade of SMP N 7 Kota Bengkulu was still low. Only 5 out of 32 students passed the standard score (> 65) and 27 out of 32 students failed. However, based on the preliminary test, the researcher applied Inquiry Based Learning strategy in cycle 1 to improve students’ reading comprehension.

Furthermore, the reading comprehension test was done which was held in the end of cycle 1. Reading comprehension test consisted of 30 multiple choice questions related to the materials that teacher gave in the learning process which is narrative text. The test was modified from many resources. Total score of students’ correct items is 100 by using formula from Sudijono (2009). 11 or 34.375 % of total students passed the standard score > 65 and 21 or 65.625 % of total students did not pass the standard score in cycle 1.

There were some improvements of the students based on the analyzed of the result in cycle 1. The result of the reading comprehension test showed that only 5 students passed the standard score which was > 65 in preliminary test or only 15.625% of total the students and 27 students did not pass the reading comprehension test or 84.375 % of total students. For the reading comprehension test in cycle 1, only 11 students or 34.375 5 of total students passed the reading comprehension test and 21 students or 65.625 % did not pass the standard score of reading comprehension test.

In students’ observation checklist, the students’ action and behavior toward learning process was in fair category. Thus, it can be concluded that the result of cycle 1 has not achieved the indicator of success. Moreover in the end of cycle 2, the teacher gave the students a reading comprehension test to see the students’ improvement in reading comprehension. The result of students’ reading comprehension test was75 % of total students or 24 of 32 students passed the standard score > 65 and 25 % of total students or 8 of 32 students not passed the standard score. From the result of the test in this cycle, the percentage of students who passed the standard score reached the indicator of success. Moreover, students’ observation checklist also showed better improvement of students’ action during the learning process. Based on the result of reading comprehension test in cycle 2, there was an improvement from baseline data, cycle 1 and cycle 2.

Furthermore, the result of students’ and teacher’s observation checklist and field note was also showed better improvement in each cycle. The students’ action during learning process became more active and had interest during learning process. The teacher’s action also showed better action in presenting and explaining all the materials.

Based on the result of students’ reading comprehension test, there was better improvement in each cycle. The percentage of students who passed the standard score reached the indicator of success. Students’ observation checklist also showed better improvement of students’ action in each cycle during the learning process. The result of this research was similar to the result of previous studies conducted by the other researcher. First, the research by Sulastri (2012) shows that Inquiry-Based Teaching and Learning Method can improve students reading comprehension and students are able to comprehend a text well. There was better improvement in average score after applied this strategy.

Furthermore, the result of this research also supports some theories from the experts about this strategy. Students’ reading comprehension can be improved by using Inquiry Based learning Strategy. It was similar to the theory from Alberta (2004) which shows that the students can develop and build their understanding and knowledge through Inquiry by active learning. Abdelraheem& Asan(2006)also states that Inquiry based-learning could encourage students’ exploration of knowledge. In the classroom, the students seemed could
explore their ideas and looked interested towards the materials during learning process in the classroom.

Using Inquiry Based Learning Strategy also influenced students’ interest and activeness in learning process that similar to the theory by Kuhne (1995) which conclude that students in the classroom would be more interested in and active by using Inquiry Based Learning strategy. In line with this, Creedy et al (1992) also affirmed that inquiry-based learning is intended to encourage students to be active rather than passive learners when they receive the information and knowledge. In order to build students interest and make them active, in cycle 2 the researcher used a video as a teaching media. Using video as a teaching media made the students pay attention to learn the materials. The result of the students’ observation checklist proves that modifying and using another media to support teaching and learning process made the students more interested and focused on materials.

4. Conclusion And Suggestion

Based on the result of the research, there were several conclusions formulated as follows: First, Inquiry Based Learning Strategy can improve students’ reading comprehension. It was shown by students’ reading comprehension test result in cycle 1 34.375% increased into 75% in cycle 2. Second, teaching and learning reading comprehension also more effective because this strategy help the students explore their background knowledge and ideas and build their interaction in the classroom. It also gives the students more opportunity to reflect their own learning and gain a deeper understanding and become better critical thinkers. Third, the students more active and interested in learning English by using Inquiry Based Learning Strategy and used media such as LCD, video, picture and interesting materials. The teacher’s participation also influenced the teaching and learning process to support and facilitate the students became active and interest toward the materials.

Based on the conclusion above, the researcher formulated some suggestions. First, the English teacher who teach in this class and the others who has the same students’ characteristics can apply various materials, media and activities for the students to make students more active and interested in learning process in the classroom. Second, this strategy could help the students easier to comprehend and understand a text. The students can relate the learning materials with their background knowledge and add the additional information during the learning process. Third, this strategy can be used as a good reading comprehension strategy for the teacher in teaching reading during the learning process. Finally, the result of this research also enrich the theory of teaching reading through this strategy and used as the references for the next researcher who is interested to conduct a research in improving students reading comprehension.
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