TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH THE INTERACTIVE TECHNIQUE

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Abstract
The objective of this research was to find out whether the Interactive technique could improve students' reading comprehension. This was a quasi-experimental research. The population of this research was the eighth grade students of SLTP Negeri 1 Kota Bengkulu which consisted of 193 students. The sample of this research was the class VIII.2 (34 students) as the experimental group and the VIII.3 (40 students) as the control group. The instrument was a reading comprehension test, which consisted of 40 items. Before the pre-test was given, it was tried out to the students of the same level. The result was t-count in the pre-test was smaller than t-table (1.26 < 2.042). This indicated that the groups were of equal ability. For the post-test, in contrast, the t-count was greater than t- table (2.7 > 2.042). This indicated that the interactive technique could improve students' reading comprehension.

Keywords: Reading Comprehension, The Interactive Technique, Quasi-Experimental, SMPN 1 Bengkulu City.

I. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Research

English is the most important foreign language. This can be seen from almost all the sources of knowledge are written and transferred in English. The other examples also can be seen from the job application and students-exchange program that use English as a main qualification to get the job and to succeed in the program. In order to be able to communicate in English fluently, students should master the four language skills that are essential for the purpose of communication, namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing.

As one of the four skills, reading plays an important role in enhancing students' English ability. In the junior high school, the reading skill is still given the first priority. Reading is an important for students nowadays because many sources of book are written in English. More importantly, reading functions as a tool to access information.

Reading is a highly effective means of extending our command of language, so it has an important place in classrooms, where language learning is the central purpose (Nutall, 1983). However, according to McLaughlin in Celce-Murcia (2001) reading is the most complex and difficult skill that students should master at school. The reason is that the students have to engage in complex interactive processes in reading.

The objective of teaching English in the junior high school is the development of communicative ability in English that embraces four language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) with an emphasis on reading ability. The order of language skills to be taught has been changed from reading, listening, writing, and speaking to reading, listening, speaking, and writing. (Huda, 1999). Wells (in

Depdiknas, 2003) puts forward four literacy levels namely performative, functional, informational, and epistemic levels. At performative level, students need to be able to read and write, and speak with use symbols. At functional level, students are expected to be able to use language for daily needs such as reading newspaper. At informational level, students need to access knowledge with their language. At epistemic level, students need to be able to transform knowledge to certain language.

Most students at the eighth grade of SLTPN 1 Bengkulu have difficulties in reading English text. It can be seen while the researcher was teaching during The Field Teaching Service (PPL) at the school from September 2007 until January 2008. The students were confused when they found new vocabularies in their reading text. It made the students could not catch the correct idea from the text and spent much times in comprehending a word. They also have difficulties in guessing the meaning of a word based on the context given in the text. They just translated the word but difficult to understand the whole meaning of the sentence appropriately.

Based on an informal observation, the students' motivation in reading English text is still low. The students felt boring in following English teaching and learning process in the classroom because they should do the same activity in every occasion. It was caused by some factors, such as the students' strategy in reading the text and the teachers' technique not fit with the situation of the classes. Every class at SLTPN 1 Bengkulu have the big class, each class includes 34 to 40 students. The teachers gave them a text, after that they asked the students to classified the word in the text into noun, adjective, and verb. The last is the students should find the meaning of each word based on the class of the word. It means that the students do not learn English in various activities. It is very important to make them learn English in a various activities to avoid boring, uncomfortable, afraid, etc. Those, the teaching of English in Indonesia, in general, and in the junior high schools, in particular, are not successful (Huda, 1999). This situation causes a great concern not only for teachers and students, but also for parents.

In order to solve the problems the researcher proposed to use an interactive technique in teaching reading. The interactive technique is one of the techniques that should be used by the teacher. By using this technique the students will be motivated, be interested, and be more active in following the teaching and learning process in the classroom.

The present research tries to investigate the effectiveness of the interactive technique by teachers and students on the teaching of reading comprehension through the interactive technique. The reasons for choosing this kind of technique, among other things, are as follows: firstly, this technique is believed to be effective to boost students' reading comprehension (Krashen & Trelease, in Herrel and Jordan, 2004). Secondly, it allows teachers to validate their teaching reading strategy in support of their students. Thirdly, this technique is very effective in helping slow learners or students that have low reading ability. Hopefully, this research can assist and support teachers in meeting some of the more daunting challenges of teaching reading.

According to the explanation above, the researcher conducted a research entitled Teaching Students' Reading Comprehension through the Interactive Technique (A Quasi- Experimental Research at the SMPN 1 Bengkulu City).

1.2 Research Problem

Based on the background, the problem of this research is:

"Can the interactive technique improve the eighth grade students' reading comprehension at the SMPN I Bengkulu city?"

1.3 Hypotheses

The hypotheses for the research are as follows:

H_1 : There is a significant difference in score average between the students who are taught with the interactive technique and the students who are taught without the interactive technique.

H_0 : There is no significant difference in score average between the students who are taught with the interactive technique and the students who are taught without the interactive technique.

1.4 Objective of the Research

The objective of this research is to find out whether or not the interactive technique
can improve the eighth grade students' reading comprehension at the SMPN I Bengkulu city.

1.5 Limitation of the Research

1. The research is only focused on the teaching reading comprehension t hrough an interactive technique.
2. The research is performed only at eighth grade students of the SLTPN 1 Bengkulu City.

1.6 Significance of the Research

Hopefully, this research may contribute to the development of EFL reading instruction, especially for English teachers of the junior high schools. Furthermore, this research is expected to enlighten and enrich English teachers' teaching reading strategies. As for students, whose teacher applies the technique suggested in this research, this research is expected to give them an opportunity to demonstrate their growing skills in authentic tasks and in a no stressful environment. Students can also actively engage in the classroom activities. Finally, the findings of this research may inspire other researchers to conduct research on other issues in teaching reading.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Reading Process

Reading is an important skill for the junior high school students to absorb the information from the text books. Whole the materials to be taught in the classroom proceeded by reading materials. If the students' reading abilities are not good, they will have difficulties in comprehending the text books. It will make them hard to catch the idea from the text.

There are many various definition of reading process. One of them is discussed by Goodman, (1988) who says that reading is a receptive language process. It is a psycholinguistic process that starts with a linguistic surface representation encoded by a writer and ends with meaning which the reader constructs.

There is thus an essential interaction between language and thought in reading. The writer of the textbooks encodes thought as language and the reader decodes language to thought. Further, proficient readers are both efficient and effective. They are effective in constructing a meaning that they can assimilate or accommodate and which bears some level of agreement with the original meaning of the author.

2.2 Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension here has been adopted from Ruddell (1994), who defines comprehension as a process in which a reader constructs meaning while, or after, interacting with text through the combination of prior knowledge and previous experience, information in text, the stance she or he takes in relationship to the text, and immediate, remembered, or anticipated social interactions and communication. Meanwhile, according to taxonomy of comprehension and levels of thinking (Ruddel, Draheim, & Barnes, 1990) there are four levels of comprehension:

The first is literal- recall of text-based information (e.g., "Do you remember the name of Sangkuriang's dog?"). The second is the interactive technique- manipulation of text-based information to infer new meaning (e.g., "Why do you suppose Sangkuriang and Dayang Sumbi would live together happily?"). The third is applicative- transfer and use of text-based and personal knowledge to develop new meaning in a novel situation (e.g., "Well, suppose that at the end of the story you were feeling the way Sangkuriang was feeling, would you still try to marry Dayang Sumbi? Why?"). The last is transactive- empathetic use of text based and personal knowledge and values to encourage the reader to identify with a character and to enter into and respond to the story more fully (e.g., "Have you ever wanted to be like Sangkuriang at the end of the story? Why?").

2.3 The Interactive Technique

The interactive technique is *the reading of books out loudly with the use of expression, different voices for different characters and gestures, and the active participation of the listeners through predicting, discussion, and checking for understanding* (Barrentine in Herrel and Michael, 2004).

It is the technique that can be more interested to the students. It also involves the exploration of the structure of text and think-aloud strategies that demonstrate how the reader gains meaning from text. This form of read-aloud is a powerful teaching tool to be used by English language learners because it produces a strong English model and it reduces anxiety in the students since they can listen and comprehend due to the use of voices, illustrations, and gestures. It allows students to see their teachers as role models and in the interactive technique the teacher demonstrate what good readers do.

2.4 Teaching Reading Comprehension through the Interactive Technique

Teaching reading comprehension through the interactive technique helps students learn reading strategies and how to comprehend the text in a no stressful environment. Students discuss and build knowledge more effective and efficient. Students also can learn about story structure, new vocabulary, and a variety of reading strategies.

The steps in implementing the interactive technique (Herrel and Jordan, 2004) are as follows: The first is choosing an appropriate book—choose a book that is above the instructional reading level of the students that will give the teacher an opportunity to provide a rich read-aloud experience through the use of different voices, excitement, and drama. The teacher needs to set aside a time each day when he/she will read aloud the interactive technique with his/her students.

The second is pre-reading and planning interactions—before beginning the read- aloud sessions, read the book he/she has chosen thoroughly. He/she needs to use sticky notes to mark places for discussion, predicting, and connections to

other books the students have read or personal experiences they can relate to the story.

The third is stopping for interactions—select a 10-15 minute section of the text to read each time, stopping at logical places between readings. The teacher should read with enthusiasm, using gestures and voices, and review the events of each day's reading and involve the students in relating the events of the day to their own experiences or similar literary experiences. He/she should use graphic devices like story mapping or daily illustrations of the events to keep the students interested.

The fourth is assessing student progress and understanding—students' abilities to paraphrase or retell events in a story are indicative of their understanding of the story. It is to be remembered that, English learners may understand the story but not have the vocabulary or confidence to retell or paraphrase. They can often draw illustrations or act out scenes to indicate their comprehension. To determine whether the strategy of the interactive technique is effective, the teacher needs to pause occasionally to allow students to demonstrate their understanding by paraphrasing, illustrating, or acting scenes. Anecdotal records of these types of informal assessments can be kept in individual student portfolios.

The teacher also needs to perform teaching appreciative reading (Thompkins, 1991). This involves three steps: before reading, during reading, and after reading.

1. The first is "before reading"—the teacher activates students' prior knowledge, provide necessary new information related to the story or the author, and arouse interest in the story. The teacher might discuss the topic or theme, show pictures, or share objects related to the story to draw on prior knowledge or to create new experiences. Before beginning to read, the teacher set the purpose for reading so that students have reason for listening to the story.
2. The second is "during reading"—the teacher reads the story aloud, during which students should be actively involved with the story.
3. The last is "after reading"—students share their reading log entries and, through discussion, relate the story to their lives and to other stories they have read. Discussion can be valuable when it leads students to think critically about the story; the focus of discussion should always be on higher level thinking skills, not factual questions.

2.5 Review of Relevant Studies

A previous research dealing with the interactive technique was a research conducted by Frimasary (2008) entitled "The Use of Short Story to Improve Students' Reading Comprehension (A Study at the Second Year of Students SMPN 2 Kota Bengkulu)". She found that the use of short story was effective in improving students' reading comprehension.

Humisah did a research (2001) entitled "Teaching Reading Comprehension through Reading Stories Aloud at Elementary School (SDN 3) Kota Bengkulu". Humisah found that the use of reading stories aloud was effective in improving students' reading comprehension {t-obtained > t-table (3.25 > 2,00)}.

Fadhli (2003) performed a research entitled "Teaching Reading Comprehension by Using Drama Text to the Second Year Students of MAN 1 Curup". The result of his research showed that there was a significant improvement of using drama text on students' reading comprehension at the MAN 1 Curup.

Another research was conducted by Rezki (2004), entitled "Teaching Reading Comprehension by Using Discussion Technique (A Study of Teaching Reading

comprehension to the Second Year Students at SLTPN 17 Bengkulu)". He found that discussion technique improved the students' reading comprehension. From all the researches above, there is one technique that is not researched yet. It is the interactive technique. This is the reason why the researcher held this research.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This research was a quasi-experimental research, in which random sampling was performed on groups, instead of on individuals. The groups consisted of the experimental and the control groups. In this case, the researcher taught reading comprehension through the interactive technique in the experimental class and without the interactive technique to the control class. Pre-test was given in order to know the equality of students' achievement in reading before treatment. After treatment for 8 meetings, the researcher gave the post-test in order to know the student's ability on reading comprehension after the treatment.

3.2 Population and Sample

Population

All of the students in the eighth grade at the SLTPN 1 Bengkulu(VIII.1 to VIII.6). The total number of population was 193 students.

Sample

The VIII.2 (34 students) class was the experimental class and the VIII.3 (40 students) class was the control class.

3.3 Instrument

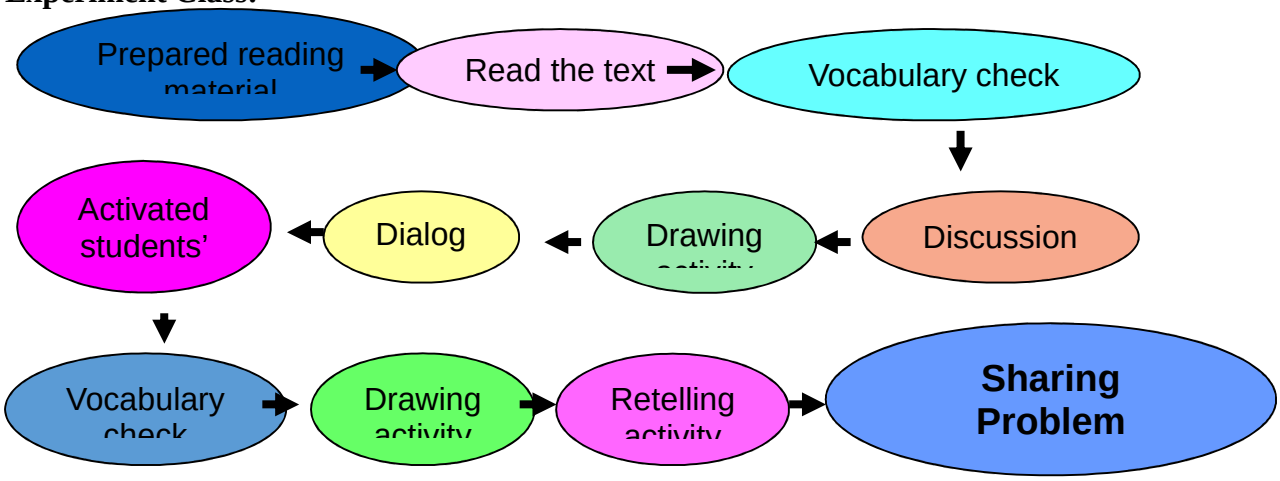
The instrument used in this research was an objective reading comprehension test, which consisted of 40 items. It consisted of 30 items from fiction texts and 10 items from non-fiction texts. It was taken from the previous relevant studies that conducted by Riyanna (2000) and Widiasih (2001).

3.4 Research Procedures

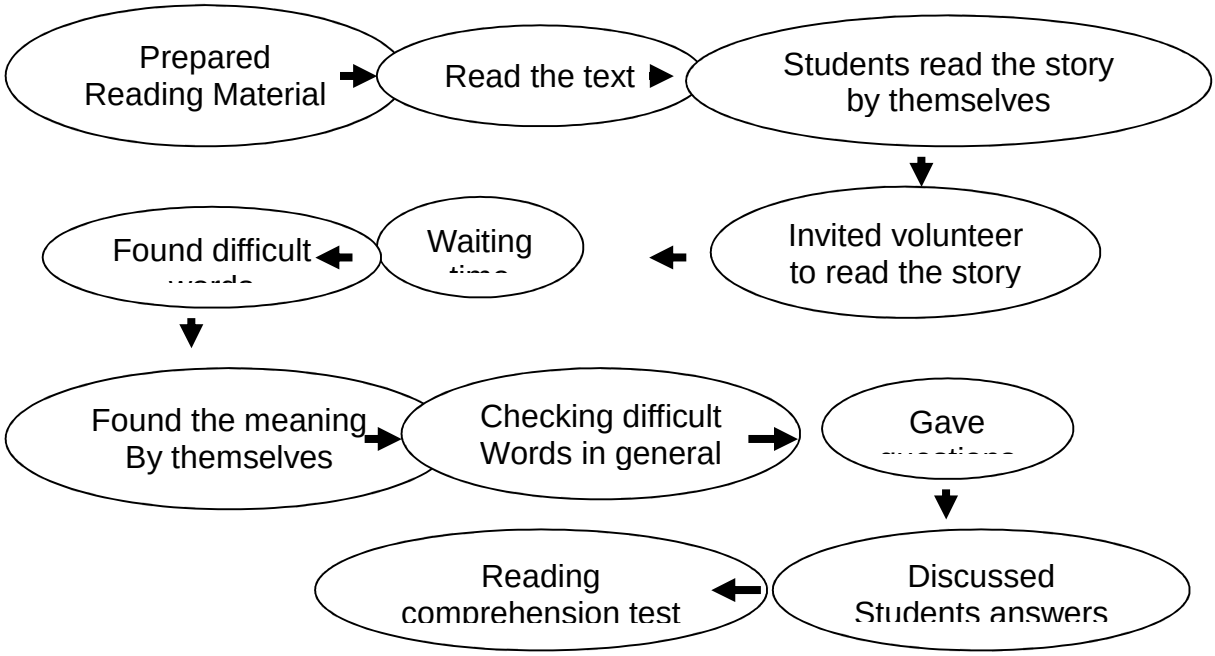
In constructing the research, the research used two groups, which were taught in the same period of time and with the same material. The difference was on the kind of treatment. The experimental group was taught with the interactive technique and the control group was taught without the interactive technique.

1. Pre-treatment Stage.
2. Treatment Stage.
3. Post-test Treatment Stage.

Experiment Class:



Control Class:



4. Result And Discussion

4.1 Try Out Result

The try out was performed on 26 February, 2008, to 40 students at eighth grade (VIII.6) of SLTPN 1. The draft for try out consisted of 40 items. The validity and reliability result showed that those instruments could be used for pre-test and post-test.

Pre-test Result

F count > F tabel

1.8 > 1.18

H0 was rejected and H1 was accepted

Thus, the variances of the samples were not homogenous. Therefore, the procedure was continued with the t-test for samples with non-homogenous variances.

T count < T table

1.26 < 2.042

H0 was accepted and H1 was rejected

There was no significant difference in pre-test score average between the experimental group and the control group. This means that the two groups were of equal ability. This experiment could therefore be continued.
Post-test Result
F count > F tabel
1.55 > 1.18
H0 was rejected and H1 was accepted
Thus, the variances of the samples were not homogenous. Therefore, the procedure was continued with the t-test for samples with non-homogenous variance.
T count > T table
2.7 > 2.042
H1 was accepted and H0 was rejected
There was a significant difference in post-test score average between the experimental group and the control group. This means that the use of the interactive technique improved students' reading comprehension. In other words, the treatment was successful.

Class	Mean score **(Pre-test)**	Mean Score **(Post-test)**	Gain Score	**Improvement**
Experimental Class	33	35	2	**Significant**
Control Class	32	32,8	0,8	**Not Significant**

4.2 Discussion

- The result of this research proved that through the interactive technique can improve students' reading comprehension
- This result gave field evidence of what Berrentine (2004) said about the interactive technique.
- According to informal observation, the interactive technique could improve students' motivation.
- Various technique is needed in teaching reading comprehension in the classroom.

5. Conclusions And Suggestions

5.1 Conclusions

Pre-test
The pre-test result showed the t-count < t-table (1.26 < 2.042). This means that the two groups were of equal ability.
Post-test
The post-test result showed the t-count > t-table (2.7 > 2.042). This means that, after treatment, there was a significant difference in reading comprehension post-test score average between the two groups.

5.2 Suggestions

Based on the conclusion above, the researcher would like to propose some suggestions:

1. Suggestion for teachers

English junior high school teachers could use the interactive technique in teaching English reading comprehension, as the interactive technique could improve the students' comprehension.

2. Suggestion for further research

The interactive technique may also improve students' motivation in learning English reading comprehension. When students observe a teacher reading fluently and with enthusiasm they often choose to read the same book, or another book by the same author for leisure reading. However, this should be verified by another research.

In this respect, the next researchers could also investigate the other types of texts, such as recount text or report text for materials for the junior high school students.

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