IMPROVING 9th GRADERS' UNFAMILIAR WORD COMPREHENSION THROUGH GUESSING MEANING FROM CONTEXT

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Abstrack: The research purpose is to investigate how well the 9th grade students' improvement in unfamiliar word comprehension of SMP Negeri 3 Kelam Permai. The research method that used is a classroom action research and the technique that used is guessing meaning from context. The finding of this research showed that Guessing Meaning from Context can help students to understand the meaning of unfamiliar word so they can comprehend a text, it is looked by the score from 42,42 at first cycle; 51,51 at second cycle; and 61,21 at third cycle.
Keywords: unfamiliar word, guessing meaning.

Abstrak: tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui seberapa baik peningkatan siswa kelas 9 dalam pemahamaman kata sulit di SMP Negeri # Kelam ai. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah penelitian tindakan kelas dan teknik yang digunakan adalah menebak arti berdasarkan konteks. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa menebak arti berdasarkan konteks bisa membantu siswa untuk memahami arti dari kata sulit sehingga mereka bisa memahami text, itu bisa dilihat dari nilai 42,42 pada pertemuan pertama; 51,51 pada pertemuan kedua; 61,21 pada pertemuan ketiga.
Kata kunci: kata sulit, menebak arti

Nowadays, English as an international language becomes a very important thing for people in countries in the world especially in globalization era, where people from one country come into other country easily. Reading is very important because many sources of information are presented in written form. According to Pang, et al, (2003, p. 6), reading is about understanding written text. Reading comprehension is the act of constructing meaning from the text.

In reading class, most of students in junior high school find unfamiliar words, phrases or sentences in the text. It makes the students difficult in understanding a text that they already read. It seems that hard in getting main idea, supporting detail and finding generic structure of narrative text. In relation to that, comprehend a reading text becomes an important target of teaching reading at school. It requires the teacher to use the appropriate teaching media, techniques, material, strategy and method of teaching in order that the students can comprehend the text easier.

According to Pang (2003, p.12), vocabulary is crucial to reading comprehension, readers need to know the meanings of individual words in order to understand a text. When we come across words that are unfamiliar, we need to look it up in dictionary or by looking at the sentences and ideas surrounding the unfamiliar word. When students read to learn in reading development, they need to learn new vocabulary in order to gain new knowledge of specific subject matter.

In this research, the researcher wants to introduce a strategy called 'Guessing Meaning from Context' to the 9th grade students of SMP Negeri 3 Kelam Permai in academic year 2011/2012. The 'Guessing Meaning from Context' technique will help students to determine the meaning of an unfamiliar word by drawing clues from context – the sentence or paragraph – in which the word appears. Context clues include definitions; examples; restatements; graphic illustrations, such as charts, tables, figures, and diagrams; found in the sentence structure and words that surround the unfamiliar word. If the students know the meaning of words, they will find main idea and generic structure easier than before and they will comprehend the text.

The researcher chooses narrative text because it is taught to the 9th grade students on the second semester and it is mentioned on the syllabus of SMP Negeri 3 Kelam Permai. Other reason the researcher chooses this text because most of students like story and they usually know many story whether they read or just listen, so the researcher think that if use narrative text in form of story in teaching learning process, the students will interest and want to know about the story, so they will give more attention. Moreover, the students will be given a narrative text taken from books or other appropriate source.

Pang (2003:12) said that many studies have shown that good readers have good vocabulary knowledge. This shows that vocabulary most important in reading comprehension. In order to comprehend a text, readers need to know the meanings of individual words in context and it is very important in learning to read and in future reading development. When students read to learn, they need to learn new vocabulary in order to gain new knowledge of specific subject matter.

Of course learning second language is more difficult and we find so much unfamiliar words. Even when we faced to a passage, we do not always know every word in it, but we can guess the unfamiliar word that called "Guessing meaning from context".

Guessing meaning from context means try to figure out what the words mean through the context. Guessing meaning from context is by looking carefully at the sentences and ideas surrounding an unfamiliar word (Chesla, 2001:17). We can use the context clues in a text to determine the meaning of unfamiliar or difficult words (Texas reading initiative, 2002:9). You can use the rest of passage, the context, to help you understand the new words (Learning Express, 2005:33). In guessing meaning from context, look at the clues provides by author in that sentence and surrounding sentences (Chesla, 2001:5). Here is an example to demonstrate how we can use context to determine what a word means.

Andy is the most unreasonable, pigheaded, sub-human life-form in the entire galaxy, and he makes me so angry I could scream! Of course I love him like a brother. I sort of have to, because he is my brother. More than that, he's my twin! That's right. Andy and Amy (that's me) have the same curly hair and dark eyes. Yet thought we look alike, we have very different disposition. You could say that we're opposites. While I'm often quiet and pensive, Andy is loud and doesn't seem to stop to think about anything. Oh, and did I mention that he's the most stubborn person on the planet?
(Chesla, 2001:18)

From the text we find at least two unfamiliar words, let's say dispositions and pensive. To find the meaning of these words, we don't need to look up in dictionary because the paragraph provides enough clues to help us to figure out what these words mean. We start with the word 'disposition'. Let's see the sentence surrounded the word. Yet thought we look alike, we have very different disposition. You could say that we're opposites. While I'm often quiet and pensive, Andy is loud and doesn't seem to stop to think about anything.

The first clue is the sentence in which dispositions is used to tell us something about what dispositions are *not*. The sentence sets up the contrast between the ways that Amy and Andy look and their dispositions. This means that dispositions are *not* something physical. The second clue, we can tell from the paragraph that dispositions have something to do with who Andy and Amy are, it means that the paragraph describes their personalities. Next clue, Amy offers two examples of their dispositions: She's quiet and pensive; he's loud and doesn't seem to think much. These are examples of personality traits.

So, from those clues we should have good idea of the meaning of dispositions. It is a person's natural qualities. This passage doesn't say anything about what Amy and Andy like to do or not do and also doesn't say about characteristics physical, but Amy is talking about their personalities.

Now, let's see the next unfamiliar word, that's pensive. The clues that we get here, Amy states that she and Andy are opposites. It means they have opposite dispositions, she is quiet and he is loud. The next pair will be opposite too, so let's see Amy's description of Andy and come up with its opposites. "Andy doesn't seem to stop to think about anything," then the opposite of it that Amy spends a lot of time thinking. From that assume, we can conclude that pensive means deep in thought.

METHOD

The form of research used by the researcher is Classroom action research. Classroom action research occurs within a specific classroom situation. Classroom action research is purposed to improve the new skill or new approach in solving the real problems by using direct action.

In improving and developing teaching, research onto classroom is needed to know what actually happens in the class, what the students think, and the response of the teacher.

According to Kurt Lewin cited in Widi (2010:103) action research consists of four components, they are: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The procedure of this research can be described as follows:

Cycles of Classroom Action Research
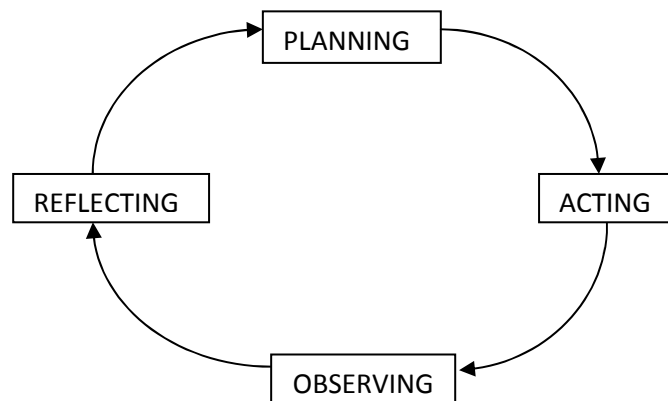
a. Planning
   The researcher prepares lesson plan, the material of narrative text, checklist table, and field note.
b. Acting
   The researcher acts in classroom as a teacher then treats the students with the technique.
c. Observing
   The researcher works with a collaborator to observe what is happening in reality.
d. Reflecting
   Based on the observation, the researcher gets feedback to reflect to next cycle.

The researcher does the real treatment by using the plan and after that observes the process of research and reflects the treatment. To make the research run well, the researcher will be assisted by collaborator to discuss and observe the treatment to get the feedback to reflect to the next cycle. In this research, the researcher will collect the data by observation technique.

The steps in learning activity by using this technique are:

A. PRE ACTIVITY
   Teacher asks to students:
1) Have you heard the word "fable"?
2) What do you know about fable?
3) Do you like to read fable?
4) Mention title of fable that you know!
5) Where does that story come from?

B. MAIN ACTIVITY

1) Teacher gives a fable in form of text; the title is 'The Lion and the Mouse'. "Do you know this story? Do you ever read this story before? Ok, now, I give you ten minutes to read the story by yourself."

The Lion and the Mouse

A Lion was awakened from sleep by a Mouse running over his face.

Rising up angrily, he caught him and was about to kill him, when the Mouse piteously entreated, saying: "If you would only spare my life, I would be sure to repay your kindness." The Lion laughed and let him go.

It happened shortly after this, the Lion was caught by some hunters, who bound him by some ropes to the ground.

The Mouse, recognizing his roar, came gnawed the rope with his teeth, and set him free.

"You ridiculed the idea of my ever being able to help you, expecting to receive from me any repayment of your favor; now you know that it is possible for even a Mouse to con benefits on a Lion."

Source: http://classics.mit.edu/aesop/fab.1.1.html

2) After the story was read, teacher invites students to find the unfamiliar words and determine the meaning from the context.

a) According to you, what the unfamiliar words did you find?

b) Who know the meaning of that word?

c) What does it mean?

d) If you face the unfamiliar word, how is your way to find the meaning of that word?

Some unfamiliar words couldn't determine by students and the teacher writes them first on the white board. Then, teacher explains that the students can determine the meaning of the unfamiliar word by using 'guessing meaning from context' technique and how is the way to use it. From the text titled "the Lion and the Mouse", the teacher takes a word "awakened" as example.

The teacher explains that we can determine unfamiliar word by looking up the words or sentence near the difficult word. When we will determine the word 'awakened', let's see the word 'sleep and running over his face'. Here, the lion was sleeping and a mouse running over his face, so we can guess what happen with this lion. So, we can guess what the meaning of awakened is.

Another example is the word 'piteously entreated'. Let's see the word 'angrily, caught him, about to kill him'. And then let's see what the mouse said to the lion. Here, we can guess the expression of the mouse when it said to the lion that is angry and want to kill it. So we can guess the meaning of the word 'piteously entreated'.

3) After that, students invited to determine the meaning of the unfamiliar words and guided by teacher.

The students try to determine the meaning of bound and gnawed.

To determine the word 'bound', see the sentence 'the lion was caught by some hunters by some ropes', so we can guess what the hunters did to the lion.

To determine the word 'gnawed', see word 'teeth'. We guess what the mouse did with its teeth to the rope, so we can guess the meaning of that word.

4) Next, teacher invited students to give their opinion, "According to you, students, what the story about?"

C. POST ACTIVITY

1) Teacher gives the chance for students to ask the material that they don't know yet.

2) Teacher gives a new text of fable and students answer the questions based on the text without open dictionary.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Finding

This research was conducted in three cycles. During applying the technique, the researcher and the collaborator cooperated to observe what happened in classroom by using field notes and observation checklist table. After the students have completed the worksheet, the researcher computed the students' score and classified the mean score into the qualification. After that, both the researcher and the collaborator reflected on the teaching-learning process and prepare the lesson plan for the next cycle. All those steps were done to obtain the research findings.

The tools of data collecting consist of multiple-choice questions. To get the data from the students' worksheet, each correct answer will get 1 point. Below is the formula to find out the students' individual score, the number of right answers multiplied 100 and then divided the total number of the test items.

$$A = \frac{X}{N} \, x100$$

Notes:
A = Students' individual score
X = the number of right answer
N = the total number of the test items

The researcher use the formula of mean score to compute the class performance. All individual scores will be summed and divided by the number of students in the class.

$$M = \frac{\Sigma X}{N}$$

Notes: M   = mean score
ΣX = the sum of students' individual score
N   = number of students

In this part, the researcher elaborated the stages of the implementation of classroom action research in the teaching-learning process in classroom:
1. First Cycle
   a. Planning Stage
      The researcher prepared the lesson plan, observation checklist table, and the form of field notes.
      During teaching the 9th grade students of SMP Negeri 3 Kelam Permai Sintang, the researcher investigated some problems that happened in reading class. As indicated earlier, the problems were the students' poor understanding of reading materials. It happened because the students faced difficulties in identifying meanings and information in narrative texts. These problems made the students become poor reader; they could not get the main idea and the details of the narrative texts. The researcher wants to help students to identify the meaning easily, so the students can comprehend the text, by using guessing meaning from context technique.

   b. Acting Stage
      The researcher and the collaborator came to the class and greet the students. One student leads others to pray together. The collaborator introduced the researcher to students. In this time, the researcher acts as a teacher. The researcher taught the students based on the lesson that have made while the collaborator observed what happened in the class by filled the observation checklist table. The researcher asked all students as brainstorming, "do you like story students?" and some students answered, "Yes", and many students just keep silent. "What kind of story?" some students said they like 'dongeng'. "What about fable? Do you know what it is?", they said "story about animal".
      Then, the researcher told the students that they will learn using fable. The researcher told that fable is one of narrative text. The researcher introduced the fable to students and gave them text of fable. The researcher guided the students to read the text and then find the unfamiliar words.
      Students raised their hand when they found the difficult word, and the researcher wrote it on the white board. After found unfamiliar words for students, the researcher asked students how the way usually they use to know the meaning of that word. Almost all students said that they use dictionary, and some others just kept silent.
      Here, the researcher introduced the technique we call "Guessing Meaning from Context". The researcher told students how to use this technique as a media to know the meaning of difficult word, that is by

looking at the sentence or the words near the difficult word, and then guessing the meaning of that word.

      After that, the researcher guided the students to try this technique to find the meaning of unfamiliar words they already found. Then, the researcher guided the students to find the supporting details in the story, next the researcher asked to students what the story about according to them.

      After that, the researcher gave chance to students to asked question of the lesson they already learn, but no one who asked something. To saw whether the students understand or not, the researcher asked the students to do a worksheet then. The researcher spent the last time to students to do their worksheet and collected them when the bell was ringing as a sign to break time.

  c. Observing Stage

      During the acting stage, both the researcher and the collaborator observed the students' behavior and the technique. The collaborator wrote the field notes and observation checklist table. And then, both the researcher and the collaborator discussed about the meeting. At first meeting, we found that the students were passive; they paid attention during the researcher explain about the lesson but they still keep silent when the researcher asked question about the lesson. The researcher didn't know whether the students already understand or not. The researcher and the collaborator checked the students' answer and gave score. However, the result was still not satisfying. The following was the score of the individual student in the first cycle, the students' name were written in the students' code.

$$M = \frac{\Sigma\, X}{N}$$
$$M = \frac{1400}{33}$$
Mean score = 42,42

  d. Reflecting Stage

      Based on the discussion between the researcher and the collaborator, it could be concluded that the first cycle was not satisfying and it still needed to apply the technique to reach the goal. It meant that second cycle was waiting for being conducted. Based on the observing stage, the improvements were as follows:

1. The researcher had to explain about "guessing meaning from context" technique and asked students to practice it.
2. The researcher had to motivated students to become more active.

2. Second cycle
  a. Planning Stage

      Based on the result of reflection in the first cycle, the researcher and the collaborator found that the students still silent even though they didn't

understand yet. In the 2nd cycle the researcher and the collaborator prepare a way to make students more active and improve their vocabulary, we preferred to divide the students in some groups, so that the students can share what they are thinking about with their friends in group and we expect the students more active. The researcher prepared the lesson plan and observation checklist table.

b. Acting Stage

In this meeting, the collaborator acted as a teacher and the researcher acted as a collaborator. The teacher taught the students based on the lesson plan. The teacher made absence of students, 33 students are present.

At the first, the teacher divides students in some groups and asked the students to sit down in group, then the teacher remained the students about fable and narrative text. Some students remember it and some others gave no expression.

Next, the teacher gave a text of fable. The teacher gave time to students to read the text and find the unfamiliar words. After found the difficult words, she told students how to use the "guessing meaning from context" technique in solving the problem of difficult words. The teacher guided the students to find the meaning of the unfamiliar words by using the technique. Next, the teacher asked the students to apply the technique without open dictionary, but some of students still open the dictionary

Next, the teacher gave a chance to students to asked question about the lesson that they didn't understand yet. In the end of the meeting, the teacher asked the students to do the worksheet.

c. Observing Stage

During the acting stage, both the teacher and the collaborator observed the students' behavior and the technique. The collaborator wrote the observation checklist table. And then, this was the time for both the researcher and the collaborator discussed about the meeting.

At the 2nd cycle, the students seemed more active to try to find the meaning of difficult word although often made mistake, but they seemed enjoy in the group, they looked more confident. But when the teacher asked the students to use the "guessing meaning from context" technique, we found that some students still open dictionary in finding the meaning of unfamiliar words. Some of them seemed that they didn't understand yet, but they didn't ask about what they don't understand when the teacher gave a chance to students to asked something about the lesson that they don't understand yet.

The researcher and the collaborator checked the students' answer and gave score. However, the result was still not satisfying. The following was the score of the individual student in the first cycle, the students' name were written in the students' code.

$$M = \frac{\Sigma\, X}{N}$$

$$M = \frac{1700}{33}$$

Mean score = 51,51

The mean score was categorized into C (poor to average). Based on the school's indicator of success, this result was still unsatisfying. However, there were some improvements in this cycle regarding to students' score. Some problems that appeared in the first cycle could be minimized in the second cycle.

d. Reflecting Stage

Based on the discussion between the researcher and the collaborator, it could be concluded that the second cycle was not satisfying. It meant that third cycle was waiting for being conducted.

Based on the problem faced in the 2nd cycle, the improvement was as follow the teacher asked the students do not open dictionary.

3. Third cycle
   a. Planning Stage

   The researcher prepared the lesson plan and observation checklist table based on the result of the second cycle. The teacher will ask the students do not open dictionary when finding the meaning of difficult words.

   The teacher will explain about how to use the technique without open dictionary, the teacher will guide the students to get the meaning of the difficult word based on context by looking the word near the difficult word.

   b. Acting Stage

   In this time, the researcher acted as teacher again. Before begin the true topic, the researcher invited students to sit down in group again.

   The researcher gave a text to students and asked them to read it by their selves, and then the researcher asked students to find some unfamiliar words in the text. The researcher asked students to write the unfamiliar words they got on the white board. There are some words on the white board that the other student knows, so the researcher just took some words that no students know.

   The researcher asked students to use the 'guessing meaning from context' technique to find the meaning of the unfamiliar words without open the dictionary. Most students used it but still guided by the researcher a little.

   After did that activity, the researcher asked to students of what the story of the text is according to them. Some of them gave their opinion. And then the researcher guided the students to find the detail information of the text.

At the end of that meeting, the researcher asked the students to do worksheet again to know the improvement in the third cycle.

c. Observing Stage

Both the researcher and the collaborator discussed about the meeting. In this cycle, we found that there are improvements showed by students. Almost the students used this technique and more active to give opinion and answer the questions.

The researcher and the collaborator checked the students' answer and gave the score. The result was satisfying because most of the students show improvement in their individual score. The following is the score of the individual student:

$$M = \frac{\Sigma X}{N}$$

$$M = \frac{2020}{33}$$

Mean score = 61,21

The mean score was categorized into B (average to good). Based on the indicators of success, this result was satisfying enough. There were improvements in this cycle.

d. Reflecting Stage

In this stage, both the researcher and the collaborator concluded that the third cycle had been successful. The students' mean score was improved. More importantly, the problems happened in the first and second cycle had been able to be minimized in the third cycle. But some students still didn't pass the minimum score of English lesson, so the researcher and the collaborator wanted to apply the third lesson plan again in research.

Discussion

This classroom action research was conducted in three cycles. Each cycle consisted of planning stage, acting stage, observing stage, and reflecting stage. The acting stage was conducted in one meeting (2 x 40 minutes) that was performed during the teaching-learning process. The data was collected in the form of students' worksheet and observation checklist table.

On the first cycle, the researcher introduces the fable as narrative text to students. The students read the text and find some unfamiliar words. The students usually open dictionary to determine the difficult word, so, here the researcher introduces the 'Guessing Meaning from Context' technique to students.

On this cycle, the researcher found that the students have no respond when the researcher explains about the technique or if the researcher asked a question as like "*any question about this technique, students?*" the students seem afraid to say something. When the researcher gives example in using the technique or asked the meaning of the word that they mat be know, the students still keep silent. Here, the researcher doesn't know whether the students understand or not but actually

the students seem confuse and afraid to ask or may be they also confuse what they will ask. After explaining the 'Guessing Meaning from Context' technique and no question from students, the researcher gives a chance to students to do exercise by using the technique, but the researcher found that the students still look up dictionary and have no idea in using the technique. So here, the researcher helps them in determining the unfamiliar words by using the technique.

As the reflecting of the first cycle, the researcher will make students more relax and enjoy in the class in learning the lesson. The researcher will make students become more active in giving respond of the topic that will discuss. So, the researcher chooses to divide students in some groups so that they feel more confident if they have friends.

At the second cycle, the researcher asked the students to sit in group first, and then the researcher gives the text of fable again and asked students to read it and find the unfamiliar words from the text. The researcher takes the unfamiliar words that no students know and write it on the white board. The researcher explains the 'guessing meaning from context' again. The students more active in giving respond to the question of the researcher and do not keep silent.

On this cycle, the researcher give students exercise to find the meaning of unfamiliar words they get by using the 'guessing meaning from context' technique. Some of them use the technique and some more still open the dictionary.

As the reflecting of the second cycle, the researcher wanted to divide students into some groups again. For the problem where the students still open the dictionary in finding the meaning of the unfamiliar words, the researcher will explain the technique more and guide the students to use the technique with close dictionary.

On the third cycle, the researcher invites students to sit in group again. This is to build the students' confident when they have friends to share or to asked because most of them shy to ask teacher directly.

The researcher gives a new text of fable to students and asks students to read it and also find the unfamiliar words from the text. The researcher explains again about how to use 'guessing meaning from context' technique in finding the meaning of the unfamiliar words.

On this cycle, the researcher found that the class was not silent anymore; the students raise their hand when they found the meaning of the word even though the meaning they get was not true. But they still keep their spirit and try to find the true meaning.

At the last, the students do exercise again and answer the questions based on the text are given without open the dictionary.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion
1. Students' mean score was increased from 42,42 in the first cycle to 51,51 in the second cycle and to 61,21 in the third cycle.

2. This classroom action research was conducted in three cycles with four stages–planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.
3. Teaching reading comprehension in a foreign language is different from teaching reading comprehension in first language.
4. Guessing meaning from context can minimize the students' problems of lacking comprehension of narrative text in identifying meaning and information, and vocabulary.

Suggestion
1. Teaching a foreign language must be active, it means teacher and students active to interact among them in the class; innovative, it means the teacher can make the situation of the class is different from before so the students do not feel bore; creative, it means the teacher has to use media of teaching so students will be interest in learning; educative, it means the topic that is talked must be has good value that educated students; and enjoyable for both teacher and students, it means teacher and students enjoy the time, enjoy the class, enjoy the lesson, enjoy the process of teaching learning.
2. The reading materials should be selected based on the readability and suitability of the content.
3. Teacher must pay attention to students' readiness before starting the lesson.
4. Teacher should manage time effectively in order to finish all activity.
5. Guessing meaning from context technique can also be a technique to be applied to other reading texts.

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