**IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS OF GRADE VIII STUDENTS THROUGH GRAMMAR STORY STRATEGY**

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**Abstract**

*This research aimed at finding out whether the use of Grammar Story Strategy can improve the students’ reading comprehension or not. The quasi-experimental research design was used in this research. The sample was VIII A as the experimental group and VIII C as the control group selected by using cluster sampling. The data were collected through pretest and posttest and were analyzed statistically. The pretest was conducted to find out the students’ prior knowledge before treatment where as the posttest was accomplished to measure their knowledge after the treatment. The result of test shows that the mean score of both experimental and control groups increased in the posttest. In the pretest the mean score of the experimental group was 34.7 and the control group was 34.8. Yet in the posttest it increased to 82.3 for the experimental group and 69.2 for the control group. The result of data analysis also shows that the t-counted (4.55) was greater than the t-table (2.011) by applying 0.05 level of significance and the degree of freedom (df) was 50. In conclusion, the use of Grammar Story Strategy can improve the students’reading comprehension.*

***Keywords****;Improving; Reading Comprehension; Grammar Story Strategy*

**INTRODUCTION**

Reading is one of the fundamental ways of getting information both in society and academic setting. It is the most urgent activity in any languages class, not only as a source of information and pleasurable activity but also as a means of combining one’s knowledge of the language. Reading provides readers with rich sources of vocabulary and grammar. It is also a practice media of reader to train their English.

Reading is considered as a very important skills. It becomes one of the most frequent skills that taught in English class in Indonesia. Even, the government through school-based curriculum 2006 has set the goals of teaching reading skills in which students are expected to have good reading comprehension to understand the content of various types of texts i.e., procedure, descriptive, recount, narrative and report.

However, reading may not be easy for some students, especially for those with limited vocabulary. Based on the result of the researcher’s observation during her preliminary research in March 2016 indicated that the main triggers of the students poor ability in understanding the information of the text was due to their language learning method. When the students read the text, they were apt to translate the individual words. As a result, they spent more time to get the messages from the text. The process of the word-for-word translation was so boring that the students lost motivation to read the text.

In order to overcome the problems, the researcher applied classroom techniques or strategies that not only can improve the students’ reading comprehension skills but also encourage them to become active readers. The techniqueis called Grammar Story Strategy a framework to help the students analyze the main characters, setting, problems, events, solution, and assist students to outline a story (Dimino, at al 1990). It is also considered a reading comprehension strategy in improving the students’ interactions to find out the important information of the story using an organizational framework (Schmidt, 1989). In other words, Grammar Story Strategy develops reading comprehension of a story.

Furthermore, Grammar Story Strategy is viewed as an effective strategy to build students’ cognitive ability at independent learning in reading comprehension skills. The students are guided to find out the important information using organizational framework. The framework is an comprehension strategy maintaining that every narrative story has a beginning, a conflict, a climax of the conflict, and ending or resolution of the conflict. They can use the framework as a foundation to answer the questions related to the text. Considering the organizational framework, the researcher was confident that the students’ problem could be solved.

**METHOD**

The researcher used quasi-experimental research design, especially non-equivalent control group design as shown below:

Experimental group: O1 X O2

Control group: O3 O4

Where:

O1 O3 = pretest

O2 04 = posttest

X = treatment

(Seliger and Shohamy, 1989: 149)

The research design above showed that there were two sample groups entangled; they were experimental and control group. Although both groups were pretested and posttested, only the experimental group got treatment. Students in the experimental group were taught using Grammar Story Strategy. On the contrary, the control group was taught using conventional teaching method through the following steps. First, the researcher started the class by giving the students some pre-questionings. Then, she explained about the topic that is going to discuss. Next, she asked the students to read the story and answered the comprehension questions about the story. Last, she asked them to determine the elements of the story.

Population is the most significant factor in conducting a research. According to Best (1981:8) “population is any group of individuals that have one or more characters in common that are interest to the researcher.”Referring to the definition above, the researcher chose grade eighth students of SMP Negeri 6 Palu as the population of the research.

In order to limit the research subject, it is necessary for the researcher to determine the research sample. Therefore, the sample of this research was selected from the population using Cluster sampling technique. Cluster sampling is a sampling technique used when “naturally” but relatively heterogeneous groupings are evident in a statistical population.

Some steps were made when determining an experimental class. First, the researcher prepared ten small pieces of paper, wrote down the name of each class, rolled the paper, and put them in a box. Second, she shook the box till one of the rolled paper fell down. The first paper falling down from the box was read class VIII A, and the second was class VIII C. The researcher then decided to take class class VIII A as the experimental group and class VIII C as the control group.

There are two types of variables of this research; they are dependent variable and independent variable. The independent variable is the value which is manipulated in an experiment. The dependent variable is the value observed by the researcher during an experiment. Therefore, the dependent variable was students’ reading comprehension skills while independent variable was the use of Grammar Story Strategy.

The first step in collecting research data was through interviewing the English teacher who already known the sample of students and has been experiencing working with them. It was mentioned in technique of data collection that there were sixteen items of the test; three items of filling the table, five items of essay tests, three items of matching, and 5 items of true false. Each correct answer of the test type did not scorethe same point. The following tables are scoring system of the test and scoring rubric for the essay test as adapted from school-based curriculum 2006.

**Table 1 Scoring System**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No | Kind of Test | Number of  Items | Score of Each Correct Items | Maximum Score |
| 1 | Filling the table | 3 | 3 | 9 |
| 2 | Essay | 5 | 3 | 15 |
| 3 | Matching | 3 | 1 | 3 |
| 4 | True/False | 5 | 1 | 5 |
|  | Total | 16 |  | 32 |

For scoring essay test varies from the point of view of elements of reading, such as grammar, vocabulary, graphology (writing rules/styles), and contents. The scoring rubric of essay test is presented in the following table:

**Table 2 Scoring Rubric of Essay Test**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| No | Description | Score |
| 1 | Correct content, grammar, and spelling | 3 |
| 2 | Correct content and grammar; Incorrect spelling | 2 |
| 3 | Incorrect answer | 1 |
| 4 | No answer | 0 |

*Adapted from KTSP 2006*

After delivering the pre-test to the students, the researcher conducted her treatment which was applied for six meetings. To know the progress of students after getting the treatment, the researcher delivered post-test at the last meeting.

**FINDINGS**

The researcher administered the test (pretest and posttest) to both sample groups. It was intended to measure the students’ comprehension skills of narrative text before and after delivery of the treatment. The result of each test was compared to determine the effectiveness of Grammar Story Strategy in improving students’ reading comprehension skills. The researcher analyzed the data of the tests using statistically analysis. The researcher conducted a pretest to both experimental and control group in the first meeting. The pretest of the experimental and the control group was administered on August 10th, 2016.

From the result of pretest, it shows that none of students got maximum score. The highest score of the experimental group on the pretest was 53.1 and the lowest was 15.6. Since the minimum standard of learning mastery was 70, none of the students could be categorized ‘pass’. Thus, the mean score of the experimental group on the pretest was **34.7**. The highest score of the control group on the pretest was 56.3 and the lowest was 21.9. Using the same minimum standard of learning mastery (70), it was found that all students failed. So, the mean score of the control group on the pretest was **34.8**. The calculation of the students individual scores of the two groups above indicated that level of students reading comprehension skills of narrative text was very low. The deviation of 1.01 points between the mean score of the experimental group (34.7) and the control group (34.8) implied that level of knowledge between the both groups on the pretest was nearly equal.

After giving six times treatment to the experimental group, the researcher administered a posttest to both groups. The posttest aimed to find out the improvement of students reading comprehension skills of narrative text after the treatment were received by the experimental group students. The posttest of the two groups was carried out on September 10th, 2016. The researcher used the same formula to calculate the students’ score on the posttest of experimental and control group.

The computation of the mean score of the control group on the posttest was **69.2**. This score indicated that the mean score of the experimental group (**82.3**) was higher. In other words, the students’ reading comprehension was greatly increased after receiving the treatment. The mean score of the control group both on the pretest and the posttest was also improved. However, the improvement was not significant, from 34.8 on the pretest to 69.2 on the posttest.

**Table 3 Students’ Pre Test and Post Test Score of the Experimental Group**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **Initial** | **Students’ Score** | |
| **Pre Test** | **Post Test** |
| 1 | **Aw** | 37.5 | 93.8 |
| 2 | **Af** | 31.3 | 84.4 |
| 3 | **Im** | 37.5 | 68.8 |
| 4 | **Fm** | 46.9 | 87.5 |
| 5 | **Dg** | 28.1 | 81.3 |
| 6 | **Sr** | 37.5 | 84.4 |
| 7 | **Mr** | 15.6 | 87.5 |
| 8 | **Rr** | 21.9 | 90.6 |
| 9 | **Ek** | 31.3 | 81.3 |
| 10 | **Si** | 28.1 | 65.6 |
| 11 | **An** | 37.5 | 78.1 |
| 12 | **Ma** | 40.6 | 87.5 |
| 13 | **Ju** | 25.0 | 96.9 |
| 14 | **Mf** | 31.3 | 93.8 |
| 15 | **Is** | 53.1 | 81.3 |
| 16 | **Pa** | 34.4 | 78.1 |
| 17 | **Ba** | 40.6 | 81.3 |
| 18 | **Da** | 34.4 | 62.5 |
| 19 | **Ar** | 37.5 | 62.5 |
| 20 | **Nf** | 46.9 | 90.6 |
| 21 | **Wi** | 37.5 | 90.6 |
| 22 | **Ao** | 34.4 | 84.4 |
| 23 | **Di** | 50.0 | 93.8 |
| 24 | **Ka** | 31.3 | 87.5 |
| 25 | **Nh** | 21.9 | 81.3 |
| 26 | **Fi** | 31.3 | 65.6 |
|  | **Total Score** | 903.1 | 2140.6 |

**Table 4Students’ Pre Test and Post Test Score of the Control Group**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No** | **Initial** | **Student Score** | |
| **Pre Test** | **Post Test** |
| **1** | **Ni** | 37.5 | 59.4 |
| **2** | **Na** | 34.4 | 68.8 |
| **3** | **Nf** | 40.6 | 71.9 |
| **4** | **Ir** | 56.3 | 71.9 |
| **5** | **Md** | 43.8 | 65.6 |
| **6** | **Dp** | 34.4 | 68.8 |
| **7** | **Ak** | 34.4 | 81.3 |
| **8** | **Af** | 21.9 | 65.6 |
| **9** | **Mu** | 28.1 | 68.8 |
| **10** | **Db** | 31.3 | 65.6 |
| **11** | **Ss** | 31.3 | 78.1 |
| **12** | **Sp** | 31.3 | 71.9 |
| **13** | **Da** | 37.5 | 62.5 |
| **14** | **Sd** | 40.6 | 71.9 |
| **15** | **Sf** | 40.6 | 78.1 |
| **16** | **Nm** | 43.8 | 65.6 |
| **17** | **Aa** | 31.3 | 68.8 |
| **18** | **Ia** | 34.4 | 65.6 |
| **19** | **Pb** | 37.5 | 68.8 |
| **20** | **Nh** | 28.1 | 71.9 |
| **21** | **Rs** | 31.3 | 62.5 |
| **22** | **Pn** | 37.5 | 78.1 |
| **23** | **Ar** | 37.5 | 65.6 |
| **24** | **Dy** | 21.9 | 75.0 |
| **25** | **Ad** | 34.4 | 65.6 |
| **26** | **Ah** | 25.0 | 62.5 |
|  | **Total Score** | 906.3 | 1800 |

The table 3 pointed out that the highest score of the experimental group on the pretest was **53.1** and the lowest was **15.6**. Since the minimum standard of learning mastery was 70, none of the students could be categorized ‘pass’. The experimental group’s post test highest score was **96.9**, while the lowest score was **62.5**. Compared to the minimum standard of learning mastery (70), as many as 21 students were categorized ‘pass’ while the remaining 5 students failed.

The table 4 clearly showed that the students highest score of the control group on the pretest was **56.3** and the lowest was **21.9**. Using the same minimum standard of learning mastery (70), it was found that all students failed.In the same table showed that the highest score of the students in the control group’s post test was **81.3** and the lowest was **59.4**. Furthermore, 10 students got higher score than the minimum standard of learning mastery of 70. Thus, there were 10 students passed, while the rest 16 students failed.

To find out that the hypothesis of the research is accepted or rejected, the researcher needed to test it based on the result of the data analysis. If the t-counted is higher or equal than t-table, it means that the hypothesis of the research is accepted or the Grammar Story Strategy is effective in improving the students’ reading comprehension skills. In contrast, if the t-counted is lower or than t-table, it means that the hypothesis of the research is rejected or the Grammar Story Strategy applied by the researcher does not give any contributions to improve students’ reading comprehension skills.

The researcher computed the mean deviation of the pretest and the posttest of both groups using the following formula.

Experimental group Control group

= =

= 47.6 = 34.4

Therefore, the mean deviation of the pretest and the posttest of the experimental and the control group was **47.6** and **34.4.** The researcher used t-counted formula by Gay (1996: 486) to find the significance difference between the experimental and control group. She found that the counted was **4.55.**

To test the significant difference between the two groups, the researcher used the level of significance 0.05 of two-tailed test and 50 degree of freedom which was obtained in the following way:

Experimental group (n1) = 26

Control group (n2) = 26

Degree of freedom (df) = n1 + n2 ­ 2

= 26 + 26 – 2

= 50 (between 40 and 60)

Since df (50) with level of significant 0.05 is not listed on the t-table, the researcher computed the t-table value using interpolation formula suggested by Gujarati (1995:809) as follows.

Level of significant = 0.05

40 = 2.021

60 = 2.000

a : 50 – 40 = 10

b: 60 – 40= 20

c : 2.021 – 2.000 = 0.021

=

df (50) = 2.021 – 0.0105 = 2.011

From explanation above that the value of df (50) with 0.05 level of significance was **2.011**. Therefore, t-counted value of **4.55** was higher than t-table value of 2.011. It indicated that the research hypothesis was accepted. In other words, the application of Grammar Story Strategy to improve reading comprehension skills of students was successful.

**DISCUSSION**

This research started with a pre-assumption that reading comprehension skills of grade eight students was poor. Therefore, the researcher purposed to improve the students’ reading comprehension skills through Grammar Story Strategy. In other words, this research aimed at finding out the effectiveness of Grammar Story Strategy in improving reading comprehension skills of students.

In order to prove the researcher’s pre-assumption about low level of reading comprehension skills, she interviewed the English teacher. The result showed that most of the students had problem in understanding the English text. They could not understand the content of the story in narrative text easily due to lack of English proficiency. In addition, the conventional method the teacher applied did not offer much help. Rather than helping students understand the reading passage, it made students tired of it. As a result, the students did not actively involve in teaching and learning process. They even caused chaotic situation in the classroom. In short, the teacher’s method failed in improving the students’ learning achievement as well as maintaining a conducive classroom environment to learning.

Besides, she conducted a pretest to experimental and control groups. The result of the pretest indicated that from the minimum standard of learning mastery was 70, none students of both groups achieved the standard. To solve the problem, the researcher delivered six times treatment to the experimental group. The following were the steps of teaching with Story Grammar Strategy and the students’ progress of each treatment given.

In the first meeting, the researcher introduced the narrative text to the students. She explained about narrative text, the purpose, the elements of the story and the generic structure. Then, she introduced the Story Grammar Strategy and how it worked. Next, she gave an example of narrative text and asked the students to find out some words they were not familiar with. Furthermore, the students were divided into some groups. They discussed and completed the organization of Story Grammar together. They answered the questions with their groups. Results of their discussions were compared with other groups. In addition, she controlled the discussion, while evaluating them informally. From the researcher’s evaluation, she concluded that the students response was not good. They were so confused with the working of the Grammar Story Strategy that they asked many questions about the classroom technique. They still got problems in determining the elements of the story and generic structure of narrative text.

In the second meeting the researcher started to develop and activate background knowledge of the students by asking some questions related to the topic. She wrote the format of Story Grammar on a whiteboard, re-explained about narrative text. The students were divided into groups of four. She asked the students to read a narrative story in groups and identified the elements of the story usingthe organization of Story Grammar. They then compared the results of their discussions with other groups. The researcher controlled the discussion and evaluated the students informally. She found that most students began to understand the working of the Grammar Story Strategy. They activelysharedtheir ideas with their peers. Yet, some students got confused determining one of the elements of the story, that was the problem of the story. Also, they could not identify the generic structure of the narrative text.

The researcher applied the same teaching steps in the third meeting. She started the teaching-learning activities by providing students with some preview questions. They were enthusiastic about answering the questions. She assigned them to read a narrative text entitled “A Bear and A Rabbit, Red Riding Hood” in groups. They answered the questions using the organization of Story Grammar. During this meeting, the students gave positive response. Almost all students could identify the problem of the story and the generic structure of the narrative text.

The researcher began the fourth meeting with asking pre-questions. The preview questions helped students to make a connection between their basic knowledge and new information. The next steps were not different from those in the previous meetings. The students could determine the elements of the story. They began to be able to determine the generic structure of the narrative text, too.

Similarly, in this fifth meeting the researcher stimulate the students’ minds with some questions. As the students were used to it, they seemed to be more relax. They happily worked in groups. Each member of the group got involved actively completing the organization of the story grammar. In other words, the students gave positive response toward the implementation of Grammar Story Strategy. They easily understood about the characteristic of the main characters, setting and the problem of the story. They also did not have problem in determining the generic structure of the text. Summarily, the Grammar Story Strategy helped the students understand the narrative text.

Like what the researcher did in the previous meetings, she opened the last meeting of the treatment by asking some preview questions. The students answered the questions enthusiastically. They even looked forward to putting in group works. When the students worked in groups, they seriously discussed the tasks given among their group members. Seemingly they did not want to waste time. They worked hard to make sure the result of group discussion get done on time. Even so, they really enjoyed the process. Hard work and togetherness among groups members brought impact on students’ reading comprehension skills. They have been able to find the elements of the story, the generic structure and even the specific information.

To determine the impact of the treatment given on students’ reading comprehension skills, the researcher administered a posttest to both experimental and control group. The result indicated that both groups had different progress. Twenty one out of 26 students in the experimental group got score >70. In contrast, only ten students of the control group obtained score>75. As a result, the mean score of the experimental group on the posttest (82.3) was higher than that of the control group (69.2). The students’ reading comprehension skills of the experimental group was increased by 50 percent. Summarily, the hypothesis of this research was accepted. The Grammar Story Strategy successfully improved reading comprehension skills of students.

**CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

After presenting and analyzing data in Chapter 4, the researcher comes to the following conclusions; first, conventional method the teacher used in teaching reading comprehension skills, especially the narative text, is proved ineffective. Neither can it help the students understand the text nor manage the classroom as a conducive place to learning. Second, the use of Grammar Story Strategy can improve reading comprehension skills of students. The conclusion is drawn from the result of t-counted value (4.55), which is higher than t-table value (2.011). Therefore, the research hypothesis is accepted. In other words, Grammar Story Strategy successfully improves reading comprehension skills of students in reading narrative text.

In connection with the above conclusions, the researcher suggests the English teachers to find an appropriate method or classroom technique that can improve students' reading comprehension skills as well as maintaining classroom as a conducive place to learning. For that reason, she recommends Grammar Story Strategy as an alternative classroom technique. This technique is considered effective in improving the students’ reading comprehension skills. Besides, it makes teaching and learning process more interesting. It also encourages students to work in groups. In other words, this technique promotes cooperative learning. In addition, students should read a lot and read different kinds of text to help them broaden their knowledge. They, so to speak, should take reading as a habit. For further researchers who are going to apply the same strategy (Grammar Story Strategy) in teaching reading comprehension skills, the researcher suggests them to use different kinds of text, such as descriptive text, recount text and procedure text.

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